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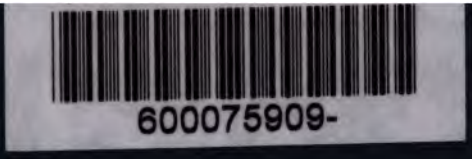
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MONSIEUR MAURICE.

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VOL. II.

MONSIEUR MAURICE,

A NEW NOVELETTE;

AND OTHER TALES.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF

"BARBARA'S HISTORY," "DEBENHAM'S VOW,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1873.

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249. g. 421.

THE STORY OF

ERNST CHRISTIAN SCHOEFFER.

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CHAPTER I.

I PURPOSE relating the story of Ernst Christian Schoeffer. In order to do this circumstantially, I will begin by stating that he was the only child of Dorothea and Wolfgang Schoeffer of Ulm, and was born in an upper chamber of a house on the Graben, just thirty-seveu years ago. To say that Wolfgang Schoeffer rented a house on the Graben is equivalent to saying at once that he lived in a poor way; for except, perhaps, some foul, tot-

tering, water-rotted tenements down by the river-side in the boatmen's quarter, there are few meaner dwellings in Ulm than those huddled against the walls and along the verge of what was once the moat surrounding that ancient Suabian city.

Old, without any of the grace of antiquity; irregular, without the charm of quaintness; all alike small, ricketty, and weatherbeaten, with tiny casement panes broken and patched, and slated roofs like scale-armour, lichen-grown and dilapidated, these Graben houses are for the most part let out in wretched lodgings, and inhabited only by the poorer sort of workmen. The moat, once thirty feet deep and filled with the brown waters of the Danube, is now dwindled to a mere ditch at the bottom of a steep *vallum*, divided off into scores of humble gardens.

Each Graben house has its narrow strip of ground, and each garden

consists of two abrupt slopes intersected by the ditch and crossed by a bit of plank and a handrail. Here and there, as one follows the road which here skirts the outer wall of the town, one looks down upon a few cabbages and potatoes, perhaps upon a few hollyhocks and nasturtiums; but the hardworking lacemakers and watchmakers who live on the Graben have no leisure to cultivate the kindly fruits of the earth, and their little gardens are mostly weed-grown and desolate.

As there are people who never seem to have been young, and yet never grow perceptibly older, so there are places which appear to crystallize at a certain stage of decay. It is thus with the Graben of Ulm. Thirty-one years seem to have made no difference in those dreary little dwellings. Squalid and tumbledown when Ernst Christian Schoeffer uttered his first feeble cry of

remonstrance against the troubles of life, they remain to this day in precisely the same condition. They seem never to have been repaired; they have not fallen to ruin; and they are as thickly inhabited as ever.

Wolfgang Schoeffer belonged to a somewhat better class than the majority of his neighbours. He was poor, but not abjectly poor; and he had seen better days. He came of an old stock of Suabian citizens, and his family claimed to be descended from two no less famous personages than Martin Schoeffer, the painter, and Peter Schoeffer, the partner of Gutenberg of Mainz. He was a second-hand bookseller by trade, and had begun life with some show of prosperity. He inherited his father's business and stock; and his wife—a pretty Bavarian with whom he had fallen in love while travelling to and fro among the great fairs of Augsburg, Munich, Bamberg

and Nuremberg—was reported to have had not only beauty but money.

So when he brought home his bride and opened a shop in the market-place, his fellow-citizens looked upon him as a rising man, and approved of him accordingly. Their approbation, however, was not destined to be of long continuance. Wolfgang Schoeffer had started too ambitiously, and at the end of five years became a bankrupt. So he left his shop in the market-place for one of the ruinous little tenements on the Graben; and there, when the brief sunshine of their career was all past and the bitterness of poverty was yet new to them both, Dorothea Schoeffer died in giving birth to the only child of their marriage.

From that day the bookseller was a changed man. He had borne his reverses with tolerable courage, but this last blow told heavily. He seemed to grow old all at once; he avoided his former ac-

quaintances and friends; he ceased to frequent any place of public worship; he became daily more bent, more grey, more gloomy, more sordid in his clothing, and more solitary in his ways.

Put out to nurse to the wife of a poor neighbour for the first year or two of his little life, the child was brought home to his father's house almost as soon as he had begun to prattle; and there, under the care of a certain Frau Martha, who was very deaf, very pious, half lodger and half servant, spent all his motherless boyhood.

It would be impossible to conceive a more dismal home for a young child than bookseller Schoeffer's house on the Graben. The floors were never scrubbed, the stairs were never swept, the windows were never cleaned or opened from year's end to year's end, and it was filled with musty books from top to bottom. The walls were lined, the floors were cumbered, the air was stale with them. The

house contained little else; nothing for comfort, nothing for grace—not even a flower in a pot, or a poor bird in a cage. Books, books, everywhere books, yellow, dusty, worm-eaten, and unfragrant, like bones in a charnel house. As for the garden, it was a very wilderness of nettles and briers.

All this, however, would have mattered little if the boy had known the happiness of being surrounded by kind parents and teachers, and children of his own age; but none of these blessings were his. His nurse, really fond of him in her dull way, believed her duties to be all fulfilled so long as she kept him clean and quiet, mended his clothes, cooked his food, taught him the Lord's Prayer, and took care that he did not drown himself in the ditch at the bottom of the Graben. His father cared for him after a morose, negligent, fitful fashion; but as he was more frequently absent from home than not, and spent his time chiefly in travel-

ling from city to city, he was well satisfied to leave the care of his child's health to Frau Martha, and his education to the government.

And it was well for Ernst that the government looked so sharply after the "intellectuals" of its young Würtembergians, compelling them, one and all, to attend its public schools from six to fourteen years of age, and doing its duty by them in those same schools so faithfully. But for that compulsory benefit, he would have run wild as the weeds in his father's garden, and have received no more education than a young savage. As it was, however, he grew and flourished despite his disadvantages, and even though he had to learn his alphabet at six years of age, had already evolved some sort of chaotic, inarticulate education for himself out of the narrow home-world by which his infancy was bounded.

The painter, like the poet, is born, not

made; and Ernst Christian Schoeffer was a born painter. He was endowed from his cradle with the gift of seeing—that precious gift that no mere training can do more than develop, and without which all the academies that ever were incorporated can achieve nothing towards the production of an artist. The skilled hand comes with time, from feeble beginnings and after many failures; but the seeing eye is God's own gift, and comes direct from heaven. This it was that made even the lonely and untaught infancy of Ernst Christian Schoeffer not wholly profitless. He was always seeing; therefore always learning. Nothing that had form, nothing that had colour, but was for him a source of entertainment and delight. The changing lights and shadows on the old turreted gateway close by, the sentinel poplars skirting the road beyond the Graben, the ragged rain-clouds drifting across the sky, the reds and browns of autumnal leaves, the very

stains and lichens on the old wall at the bottom of the garden, had each their teaching for him. As a very little child, he would sit for hours watching these things, unconsciously laying up stores of precious knowledge, and drinking in such deep delight as his baby tongue could find no utterance for in words. It has been said that there is a pleasure in painting which none but painters know; and it might with equal truth be affirmed that there is a pleasure in seeing which none but painters know. Like the prince in the fairy-tale to whom it was given to behold all the treasures of the world, the veins of gold and silver ore, the unsought diamonds and rubies hidden far down beneath the trodden surface of the earth, so it is given to the painter to detect shapes and colours, graces and glories, to which his fellow-men are blind.

This privilege is his from very birth. He enjoys it even before he knows that he enjoys it. A brighter heaven

than the heaven of other babes lies about him in his infancy; and for him alone of all the sons of Adam that "vision splendid" which even nature's own poet lamented as he travelled on to later life, *never* "fades into the light of common day."

Thus it was that Ernst was a happy child despite the squalor of his surroundings; thus it was that even in the midst of these surroundings he came to an instinctive sense of poetry and beauty. Nor were the clouds and trees and shadows his only teachers. As he grew older he discovered an inexhaustible treasure in his father's books. A good third of Wolfgang Schoeffer's stock consisted of Bibles—Bibles of all shapes and sizes; in all languages; of all dates; some bound in wood, some in vellum, some in old brown leather; many of them illustrated with quaint woodcuts, and some with coloured maps and tail-pieces of strange device. Bibles, indeed, were the bookseller's speciality;

and it was chiefly to buy and sell scarce and curious copies that he travelled so constantly from city to city.

From these—from the "storied windows" and altar-pieces of the churches round about—from the Gothic fountains at the corners of the streets—above all from the cathedral, with its rich sculptures and traceries, and its wonderful tower like a filigree of old brown stone, the boy learned and studied every day of his life. He passed that cathedral each time that he went to school, and lingered before it each time that he returned on his homeward journey. He came to know every stone of it by heart; every niche and saint and canopy; every tuft of wind-sown grass that waved aloft on buttress and pinnacle. He knew it in the morning light; in the afternoon, when the shadows lay richer and deeper; in the evening, when the eastern front was golden with sunset. The rooks that built undisturbed in the tower were his familiar friends.

The great entrance peopled with quaint processions, and the bas-reliefs in the spandrils of the huge gothic arch above the triple doorway, filled him with a perpetual wonder and delight. There is God creating the earth, the air, and the sea; the Almighty artificer being represented each time as an old man dressed in a flowing robe with a globe in his right hand; the only variation in each repetition being that he holds a smooth globe for the earth, a curly globe for the air, and a wavy globe for the sea. Then comes the creation of man; Adam looking at his own shapeless legs with great astonishment, as well indeed he might. Then the creation of Eve, the temptation, and the banishment.

Nothing in mediæval art is more naïve and curious than these bas-reliefs above the principal entrance of Ulm cathedral! Few travellers turn aside from the beaten track to see them; few artists study them; but Ernst Christian Schoeffer

learned all they had to teach both within and without. Messages written with the brush and the chisel, upon iron, stone, wood, he hearkened to them all with humility and reverence. The relievo triptoglyph over the high altar, with its Magi gorgeous in gold and colours, which in very early childhood first fixed his wondering eyes; the slender, elaborate pyx, like a magnified ivory carving; the choir with its quaint, delicate, wonderful oak sculptures, its clustering fruits and flowers, its lace-like canopies, and its triple rank of heroes, Pagan, Jewish, and Christian, each feature of whose unauthentic faces he knew by heart; the carved scutcheons of dead and gone nobles hung all about the lower end of the nave; the monumental brasses, memorial portraits, and mediæval frescoes scattered so lavishly about the private chapels in the side aisles—these things were his first masters in art, and upon them his genius fed and strengthened year by year. It

showed itself, as the artist instinct generally does show itself, in all kinds of blundering first attempts. The boy tried his prentice-hand upon every material that fell in his way. He scrawled upon his slate and in his copybooks; he dabbled in clay; he daubed a little in coarse pigments begged from a neighbouring house-painter; he carved rude statuettes in common firewood. These occupations kept him quiet in holiday hours, and his father, when at home, desired no more.

At length the time came when Ernst Christian's seven years of government-schooling were on the point of expiring. He was now fourteen, and of an age to be apprenticed to a trade. His father intended him for his own business; but the boy had made up his mind to be a painter, and, foreseeing the struggle to come, had also made up his mind to be first in the field. There was fierce opposition to be encountered, and there were innumerable difficulties to be overcome;

therefore, he argued, the sooner the opposition was combated and the difficulties were faced, the better. It was characteristic of Ernst Christian Schoeffer's peculiar temperament that he should have so measured himself against these obstacles. It was especially characteristic that he should have the moral gallantry to face his father at once upon this matter so vital to his own happiness, and yet that his heart should beat and his breath come short as he went up to that father's chamber on the evening of the very day when his school term had expired.

It was about six o'clock on a bleak November night. The stairs creaked under his feet as he went feeling his way in the darkness, and rehearsing the words in which he meant to begin. On the landing he paused, and guided by a thread of light along the threshold, tapped at his father's door. No reply came. He listened—he heard a sound as of something being closed and locked—he tapped again

—he thought he was answered—he went in.

His father, standing by the table with a framed oil-painting lying before him and a key in his hand, turned upon the boy in a sudden paroxysm of anger.

"What do you want?" he said, furiously. "How dare you come in without knocking?"

"I knocked, mein Vater, but—Gott! what a beautiful picture!"

It was a beautiful picture. It represented a fair, delicate-featured girl with down-looking eyes, and pale golden hair woven into a profusion of soft braids, and a smile as pensive, as sweet, as sad as that of the Madonna del Velo. The painter of this gracious head had done his work lovingly and lingeringly. Though too cold in colour and too hard in effect, the portrait was as highly finished as a miniature, and as patient in detail as if it had come from the easel of Memling or Floris. It measured about

twelve inches square, and was enclosed in a clumsy frame of plain black wood, the front of which was glazed, worked upon hinges like a little door, and locked with a small brass key.

The boy forgot his own purpose, his father's anger, and all else at the sight of this treasure. He pressed forward to look upon it, but the bookseller thrust him roughly back.

"The picture is nothing to thee," he said hastily. "Get thee gone. Get down to Frau Martha. I am busy to-night."

"But, father . . ."

"Get thee down, I say. Go learn thy tasks for to-morrow."

"I have none. The Herr President signed my certificate to-day; and he said, if you wished to enter me for another term . . ."

"Another term, indeed!" interrupted Schoeffer. "Who is to pay for it? Let the Herr President tell me that. There

is not a poorer man in Würtemberg than myself."

"He said . . ."

"It is nothing to me what he said. There have been times when I scarce knew where to find food and clothing for thee."

The lad glanced round the squalid room, and sighed.

"I know it, father," he replied.

"It is well you do know it," replied the bookseller, sharply. "You have to earn your bread."

"That is what I came about, father. I wish to be a painter."

The Herr Schoeffer shook his head.

"A painter?" he said. "Pooh! It is an unhealthy trade. Besides, I have not a groschen wherewith to apprentice thee. No, boy—thou must follow thy father's calling—a poor one, but, at the worst, better than neighbour Strauss's."

"Neighbour Strauss!" echoed the lad. "Do you think I wish to be a house-

painter, like neighbour Strauss? No, no —I mean to be a painter like our ancestor, Martin Schoeffer."

His father looked at him incredulously.

"The boy is mad," he said, with a contemptuous shrug.

"I am not mad. I would live on bread and water, to be a painter. I would beg my way to Rome on foot, if you would only let me go."

"Rome! What would you do in Rome, pray, when you *had* begged your way there?"

"I would go to Overbeck's studio, and tell him that I was a poor German boy who loved art, and wished to be a painter."

The bookseller struck the table angrily with his clenched fist.

"Let me hear no more of this," he said. "You talk like a fool."

"But . . ."

"Silence! Not another word. Get

you down stairs, and bid Frau Martha make the soup hot for supper."

The boy obeyed reluctantly. As he reached the door his father called him back.

"Hark you, Ernst," he said, more gently. "This portrait is not to be talked about. You must not tell anyone that you have seen it. Do you hear?—not even Frau Martha."

"Whose portrait is it, father?"

The bookseller hesitated.

"You must give me your word not to speak about it," he said, fixing a searching eye upon his son's face.

"I will never speak of it, father."

"You promise?"

"I promise. But whose portrait is it?"

"Your—your mother's."

"My mother's!"

The lad sprang forward; would have taken the picture in his hand, but that his father again put him back, and would not let him touch it.

"You can see it well enough where it is," he said with a frown.

"Oh, father! was my mother so beautiful? Were her eyes so very sad, always?"

And the boy's own eyes filled with sudden tears.

"She was very like it," replied the bookseller, gloomily. "There—you have looked long enough."

"May I see it again to-morrow?"

"No—not to-morrow—some day, perhaps. Now go—and remember your promise."

"I will remember it, and keep it," said Ernst, and left the room.

He made his way slowly down the dark stairs, thinking over all that had been said.

"My mother's portrait!" he murmured to himself. "To think that he had my mother's portrait hidden away all these years!"

When he had reached the bottom step

he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and fell into a long reverie. His heart was heavy, and the future seemed to lie before him all dark and uncertain, like a scene in a dream.

At length he sprang to his feet, resolved and self-reliant once more.

"I *will* be a painter!" he exclaimed, half aloud. "I *will* be a painter; and I will paint as well as that, too, some day."

CHAPTER II.

ERNST CHRISTIAN SCHOEFFER carried his point and became a painter after all. Not, however, without a long and toilsome battle—a battle against his father's imperious will; against poverty, prejudice, and obscurity—a battle that lasted three whole years, and cost the victor many a fall and many a bitter blow before it was won. Still he did win it. He became a painter. He even went to Rome.

A drawing made in secret and sent up anonymously to the government school of art in Ulm; a prize carried off, and a year's gratuitous instruction gained

thereby; a second prize achieved, and a second year gained; a third, and its results a gold medal and a purse of two hundred and fifty florins—these were the steps by which the youth struggled on to the fulfilment of his hopes.

His father stormed, railed, argued, and finally yielded a sullen acquiescence.

The son worked like a Helot, rising early and studying late; mastering anatomy and perspective by night, drawing from models by day; copying everything that came within his reach, and earning a few kreutzers here and there as he could, to pay for his pencils and colours. He was a proud, sensitive boy at heart, but he was above no drudgery by which his studies might be forwarded. He would carry a parcel, sweep a studio, hold a horse—do anything, in fact, that was neither dishonest nor disgraceful, if only the ends of his so-cherished art could be promoted thereby.

That purse came as if dropped direct

from heaven. Every florin in it was stamped for him with the magic name of Rome. Those two hundred and fifty coins represented in his eyes the inexhaustible riches of opportunity. They opened the gates of knowledge to his eager footsteps. They were his passport to the tomb of Raffaelle.

Ernst Christian would not have spent a fraction of that prize in Ulm for all the temptations that assailed Saint Anthony. He regarded it as a sacred deposit—(it was worth about twenty-two pounds of English money!) — and having paid in two hundred of his florins at Herr Schleiermacher's bank to be transmitted to Rome, he took fifty for his travelling expenses, and set out for the Eternal City with a light heart and a still lighter knapsack.

He did not literally make his way from Ulm to Rome on foot. It would have cost him more than his fifty florins for food and lodging by the way if he had done so; but he travelled by the fourth

class as far as any German railway would carry him; and he walked through Switzerland, and over the Alps; and what with a lift in a peasant's cart now and then, or a cheap fare by rail or diligence, he found himself one evening, just at sunset, before the gates of the Porta del Popolo, with only a few pence left in his pocket, and the likeness of a pair of boots on his feet.

How he lived in Rome for the next five years—how, indeed, half the poor students live whom one meets in every gallery and every church — was, and is, a marvel and a mystery. To say that he worked like a giant and struggled on in the teeth of a thousand difficulties, is to say nothing. Like Garibaldi's men, he had to fight without ammunition. He lodged over a stable, in a wretched yard opening off the Via Ripetta. He dined daily at one of those unfragrant stalls where they sell hot vegetables and occult meats, near the

Fountain of Trevi. He mended his own stockings; he blacked his own shoes; he inked the seams of his coat on lecture days, when he went to the Accademia of San Luca; he made cheap views of the Temple of Vesta, the Coliseum, and the pyramid of Caius Cestius, by night, when his long day of unresting study was over. Sometimes he painted a portrait, sometimes a sign. Nothing came amiss to him, if only he might scrape together as many bajocchi each day as should pay for his truckle-bed, his loaf, his plate of *broccoli strascinato*, and his painting materials.

He had hoped to win some little grist for his mill in the way of academic prizes; but he soon found, alas! that money prizes in Rome are neither plentiful nor easily won. He had a whole army of clever competitors against him, most of whom were older and more advanced than himself. However, he flung himself into the contest with the desperate energy of

one whose bread of life depends on his success, and long before his first year expired, had attracted the attention of his masters and earned the respect of his fellow-students.

At the close of his second term, his progress was rewarded by a few words of presidential encomium and a wreath of merit. This wreath of merit (which consisted of a double row of laurel leaves tied at the back with a piece of white satin ribbon, fringed with gold) could scarcely be regarded as a timely testimonial to a poor young man who wanted both a coat and a dinner. One could hardly look upon it as an addition to his wardrobe. It was not possible to make soup of it. He could not even sell it—for who would care to buy a laurel wreath, tied up with a yard and a half of white satin ribbon? However, it gave him encouragement. It stimulated his self-reliance, and soothed his pride—that pride which cannot but be galled by the

daily rubs and shifts of extreme penury.

Thus, from term to term, from year to year, winning now a medal, now a scholarship, now a small sum of money, he made his way an inch at a time, and struggled at last into the foremost rank of student-life in Rome. Then, just as his fifth year was drawing to a close, and he was looking forward with something more than hope to the chances of achieving an honorary rank in the Accademia, he was summoned home to the bedside of his dying father.

There was not an hour to lose. The elder Schoeffer had been struck down by paralysis while travelling back from the great book-fair at Leipsic, and had continued slowly sinking ever since. His one prayer was that he might see his son once more before he died.

A poor man cannot travel fast. His nearest and dearest may lie dying a thousand miles away; yet the slowest train and the cheapest carriage must

bear him to them. Our poor painter had almost to beg his way to Ulm. How his prayers, his hopes, his fears outstripped his weary feet—how his heart seemed to go on before him all the way—how he sickened at each delay, and counted the miles, the days, the hours, that lay between him and the only parent whom he had ever known, were tortures which only one who had experienced them could adequately describe.

At length, after nearly three weeks of painful journeying, he found himself once again traversing the blank expanse of country by which Ulm is approached from the side of Switzerland.

Here great desolate flats unbroken for miles by hedge, or tree, or human habitation; wind-swept slopes with, perhaps, a scant fir or two profiled against the distant horizon; and huge districts of corn-land and meadow-land with not even a dike of separation between them, succeed each other for leagues together.

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Sometimes one sees a sad-looking peasant ploughing slowly along behind his team of oxen, or a squalid child keeping sheep in the midst of a wilderness of scanty pasture. Sometimes one passes a wretched little town with a small white church in the midst, and, close by, an enormous, frowning, prison-like château, bigger than a dozen such towns and churches put together. Let the eye wander where it will, all is alike joyless, lifeless, and bleak.

Plodding on foot along a dusty road that seemed as if geometrically produced in one never-ending line, the young man toiled through this dreary landscape well-nigh from dawn to sunset before the distant batteries, forts, and earthworks of Ulm became visible to his eager eyes. From that moment his fatigue was forgotten. He pressed forward as if he had but first set out upon the long day's march, and entered the gates of his native city about an hour after dusk.

For several days past, the conviction that he should be too late had weighed heavily upon him. He had repeatedly told himself that all would be over—that he should never hear his father's voice nor see his father's face again; but even those who are best prepared for the worst are never so fortified against it as not to feel the shock. Death is a surprise—a woful, terrible surprise—whenever it comes, even though we may be sitting by the bedside waiting for it, watching for it, dreading it as each breath leaves the lips we love. This poor student had, as he thought, prepared himself manfully; and yet when he came to the old house on the Graben, saw no light in any window, heard the echo of his repeated knocking reverberate desolately through the empty floors, and was presently warned off by a voice from an upper chamber of some neighbour's house, with the information that Master Schoeffer was dead, and if any one wanted particulars he must go

to the Polizei, he felt as if he could hardly believe in the reality of his misfortune.

It was a hard blow. Although the bookseller had been so often absent from his home, although as a father he had been undemonstrative, careless, gloomy, and irritable, still, in his own strange way, he had loved his son, and the young painter felt his loss bitterly. All weary as he was, he sat down on the desolate threshold of what had once been home, and wept in the darkness as if his heart were breaking.

Perhaps he had scarcely known till then that he loved his father so well.

He slept that night at a little Gasthof down by the Danube, and went next morning to the Polizei to lay claim to Wolfgang Schoeffer's effects. The news which there awaited him was both startling and painful. His father, always a poor man, had been brought home after his seizure by easy stages, and what

with the heavy expenses attending his journey, the cost of medical attendance, and the outlay incurred at his funeral, the bookseller had died in debt, and the whole of his possessions had been sold for the benefit of his creditors.

Chief among these, it seems, was Herr Schleiermacher, the banker and money-lender in the Anlage. Applied to by Frau Martha when her master lay ill, he had advanced a certain loan upon the bookseller's stock, and when all was over, laid peremptory claim to his money. A valuation having then been taken, the stock and household goods were sold, and the money-lender, doctor, and under-taker took what they could get, which, after all, fell below the amount of their several claims. So poor Ernst Christian Schoeffer found himself homeless and penniless in the streets of his native city.

But such was the agony of self-reproach into which he was thrown on learning

funeral expenses came to one hundred florins. There was also a half-year's rent owing for the house on the Graben, besides a few trifling bills for smaller items, making about thirty florins more. Taken altogether, the liabilities fell little short of five hundred florins, and the effects realized just three hundred and forty-five. Not a kreutzer more or less. Here are the accounts. You can examine them at your convenience."

The young man's hand closed convulsively upon the papers.

"Then my father's creditors are losers to the extent of one hundred and fifty-five florins," he said, in a troubled voice.

"Just so."

"I pledge myself to repay them. I will work day and night to do this."

The Jew nodded pleasantly.

"We expected no less from you, Herr Schoeffer," he said.

"And I may take these accounts to

look through at——" He was going to say "at home," but remembering that he had now no home, checked himself, and substituted "at my leisure."

"By all means."

He rose—he hesitated—he had evidently something still to say.

"There is one very precious and sacred relic," he faltered, "which I would give much to possess."

"If it be anything which I can assist you to recover, I shall be happy to do so," replied the banker politely.

"It is my mother's portrait."

"Will you have the goodness to describe it?"

The painter described the picture minutely. The banker listened, looked down, coughed dubiously, and rubbed his little fat hands slowly over and over.

"Dear me!" he said, "is that a portrait of your mother? How handsome she must have been!"

"Then you recognise it?"

"Perfectly."

"And can you tell me what has become of it?"

The young man's question came with hot eagerness: the Jew's reply with cool composure.

"Why, yes—no one better. That picture is in my own possession."

"In yours!"

The tone, the look of entreaty, were alike unmistakeable; but Herr Schleiermacher met both with the civilest imperturbability imaginable.

"Exactly so," he replied. "It is a charming little thing, and I really value it."

"But, Herr Schleiermacher—my good Herr Schleiermacher, you do not value it as I do!"

"I value it too well to part from it," said the banker.

"Herr Schleiermacher, I would serve you for seven years to earn back my mother's portrait."

Herr Schleiermacher shook his shiny head.

"I regret to refuse you," he said; "but it is quite out of my power to grant your request. I like the picture—my daughter has taken quite a fancy for it—and I have been too heavy a loser in this matter already."

"It is worth more than the whole of my poor father's debt put together!" cried the young man, impetuously.

"Not as a work of art. If it were, I should not feel justified in keeping it."

"What would you do with it?"

"Sell it, of course, my good sir! and when I had repaid myself from the proceeds, refund the surplus to yourself."

The painter turned pale.

"For God's sake don't do that!" he said quickly.

"I do not mean to do it. I mean to keep it."

The Herr Schleiermacher uttered these last words in a tone that rendered further

discussion impossible, and the young man reluctantly took his departure.

He came back, however, the next day at the same hour.

"Herr Schleiermacher," he said "I have come to ask what price you set on my mother's portrait."

"I set no price upon it, Herr Schoeffer. I do not mean to sell it."

"But you would not—you *could* not—refuse to sell it, if I could afford to pay for it!"

"If I understood you rightly when you did me the favour to call upon me yesterday," said the banker, very stiffly, "you are not even in a position to pay off the residue of your father's liability."

"That is true; but...."

"Excuse me, Herr Schoeffer. It will be time enough to enter on this topic when you come to me with your one hundred and fifty-five florins in your hand. I wish you a good morning."

Again the painter turned away dis-

heartened; but again the next day, at the same hour, he returned to the charge.

"Herr Schleiermacher," he began, "will you let me earn that portrait? Will you take me into your office? Will you receive me as one of your clerks? I write a good fair hand, and I am a tolerable accountant. If you will agree to this, I will work for you without salary till I have earned the picture back at whatever price you choose to set upon it."

The banker laughed outright.

"My dear Herr Schoeffer," he said, "gentlemen in your profession are the very worst stuff in the world to cut bankers' clerks from! No, I thank you. No æsthetic accountants for me. Besides, if you worked without pay, how would you live?"

"I would rise at dawn in Summer, and work by lamplight in Winter, and so earn a few florins a week. I can live on dry bread; I have done so before now."

"You are a most energetic young man," said Herr Schleiermacher; "and you deserve to succeed in life. What a pity you were not brought up to business! you would have made a fortune."

"I do not want a fortune. I only want my mother's portrait."

The Jew shrugged his shoulders.

"Will you try me for a week, Herr Schleiermacher?"

"Not for a day. Your proposal, Herr Schoeffer, is wholly impracticable."

For the third time the poor painter went his way sorrowing. He desired the picture passionately, and each fresh rebuff only quickened his intense longing for it. He remembered how his father had treasured it, and he also remembered how it was the only earthly record of a mother whom he had never been so blest as to know.

The next day he was back again at the money-lender's office with a fresh scheme.

"For the fourth time," he said, "I

come to appeal to you. If you have the heart of a man you will not refuse what I am now about to ask from you."

The banker tapped impatiently upon his desk.

"Be brief, if you please, Herr Schoeffer," he replied. "My time is valuable, and I warn you that this is the last occasion on which I can listen to you."

"This then is what I have to propose. Give me a year in which to earn the one hundred and fifty-five florins, and promise me that you will neither sell the portrait nor give it away during that time!"

The banker leaned back in his chair and seemed as if he were taking this request into consideration.

"Good Heavens! exclaimed Ernst, impatiently, "is it possible that you hesitate? Do I ask anything unfair—anything unreasonable? Think, Sir—think if it were your own mother's portrait—a mother who had given her life for yours...."

His voice broke, and he turned aside to conceal his trouble.

Herr Schleiermacher looked grave.

"I hesitate," he replied, "because it has occurred to me that there may possibly be some other way. Do you paint portraits, Herr Schoeffer?"

"Of course I do! May I paint yours? Oh, my dear, excellent, amiable Herr Schleiermacher, let me paint your portrait!"

The Herr Schleiermacher smiled and shook his head.

"Not mine," he said. "I would not give a kreutzer for my own portrait; but my daughter...."

"I will paint her for you in any style you please. Only tell me what you wish done, and I will do it."

The banker was excessively amused.

"I must speak to Salome first," he replied. "Call upon me to-morrow at the same time, and I will tell you more about it."

He returned the following day, as he was bidden, and to his supreme joy the banker informed him that his daughter was willing to sit, and that he might begin on the morrow.

"As for terms," said he, "we will make it picture for picture. You shall paint my daughter's portrait, and when it is done you shall receive your mother's in exchange. Will that content you?"

"Perfectly."

"And you will not object to paint my Salome on a somewhat larger scale?"

"You shall have her at full-length, life-size, after the manner of Vandyck."

And Herr Schleiermacher was well satisfied, knowing that he had the best of the bargain.

CHAPTER III.

POOR Ernst Christian Schoeffer! it was his destiny. He fell desperately in love with Salome Schleiermacher. She was very lovely,—lovely with the dazzling oriental loveliness of Rebecca—of Rachel —of Mariamne. He had not seen a woman in Italy to compare with her. Her skin was of that soft, rich tender brown which so enchants us in the Madonna della Seggiola. Her eyes were as brilliant and bewitching as those of the Fornarina in the Palazzo Pitti. Her smile was stolen from Leonardo's portrait of Joanna of Naples. Her hands, long, white, slender, were Vandyck's.

Her gestures, her attitudes, were Titian's. The young painter, to the destruction of his peace, beheld in her the rare and perfect epitome of all that he had admired in art and despaired of in nature. And Salome Schleiermacher was as charming as she was beautiful, and as capricious as either. It seemed to be her delight to enchant, to torment, to bewilder her unfortunate victim. To-day she would be all mirth, to-morrow all gravity; to-day all affability, to-morrow all reserve. Sometimes she would talk of poetry, of music, of art, and talk of them, too, with intelligence and enthusiasm. At other times, she would prattle of none but the most childish matters, and pout at a serious word.

Then she was the most tiresome of sitters. She changed her mind about the dress in which she would be painted, about the attitude, the background, the accessories, fifty times, at least, during the progress of the work. She would be

taken in her ordinary dress; she would be taken in her riding-habit; she would be taken as Jessica with the casket; as Ruth with the corn-sheaf on her head—there was no end to her caprices, and there promised to be no end to the picture.

And all this time the infatuated young painter thought each new dress and attitude more becoming than the last, and, Penelope-like, spent as much time in undoing his work as in doing it.

"When it is once finished," thought he, "all will be over. I shall no longer hear the daily music of her voice; I shall not dare to intrude upon her privacy; I shall be as much parted from her as if we lived in two separate hemispheres. What better, then, can I desire than that the picture may remain in progress for ever?"

He was ready, in fact, to spend his life upon it; and I am by no means prepared to say that the beautiful Salome was not quite as well disposed to prolong the task as himself.

Meanwhile, Ernst Christian was living within an inch of starvation. Having once been a pupil in the local school of art, he had been able to procure his painting materials upon credit; but he found it far more difficult to get food and lodging on the same terms. There were days when he wanted bread. There were nights when he knew not where to lay his head. His clothes were worn so threadbare that he was ashamed to be seen in them. Let those who have read the lives of Savage, of Chatterton, of Heyne, supply the painful details of starvation.

There must be an end to all things mortal, and despite alterations and delays innumerable, the portrait of Salome Schleiermacher at length approached completion. There could be no question of the artist's perfect success. He had been painting with his heart as well as with his hand, and the result was a work of such force, such delicacy, such complete

and life-like portraiture, as would have made the fame and fortune of a painter in any city less hopelessly stagnant than Ulm. The beautiful Jewess, holding a fan of peacock's feathers in her hand and dressed in a rich robe of white satin brocaded with gold, seemed almost to be stepping from the frame. The smile flickered on her lips; the fixture of her eye had motion in it. It was a portrait that Paul Veronese might have designed, and Rubens painted.

"Herr Schoeffer," said the banker, when he came in one morning to observe the progress of the work, "I am so well content—nay, so much more than content —that I will not keep you longer without your mother's picture. You can take it home with you, if you choose, to-day."

Ernst was as grateful as if he had not already earned it ten times over. He grasped the banker's hand; he thanked him with tears in his eyes; and he went

home to his garret that afternoon, happier than a king.

The dear, dear portrait! The portrait that he had first seen in his father's chamber that memorable night, now more than eight years ago, when he first announced his desire to become a painter! It was not in the least faded or changed. The eyes had the same sad sweetness as of old. The pale golden braids shone with an undiminished lustre.

He set it before him on the table, and sat down to eat his evening meal before it. It seemed to light the sordid attic like a glory. It gave quite a delicious flavour to his lump of stale bread and his slice of melon. It turned the water in his pitcher into wine.

Thus munching and meditating, with his eyes fixed all the time upon his newly-recovered treasure, he observed that the canvas seemed to have warped away from the stretcher at one corner,

and that the picture bulged in the middle, as old pictures are sometimes apt to do. He had long since resolved to carve an exquisite frame for it some day; now it occurred to him that the painting would be improved by what is technically called "backing"—that is to say, by being relieved from tension, and pasted down upon a freshly-strained canvas.

"It would preserve as well as improve it," he muttered to himself, as he swept the crumbs from the table, "I will do it at once, and give it a coat of varnish at the same time."

And with this he drew the picture towards him, and proceeded to break open the front of the frame with his knife. The little brass key had doubtless been lost long since; at all events Herr Schleiermacher had not given it to him. So he forced the case off at the hinges, and proceeded to remove the picture. It was held in its place by two little brass

buttons green with verdigris, and came out when these were turned, quite easily.

Then he saw what it was that had bulged the surface of the canvas. No wonder, indeed, that it had warped away from the frame! It was crammed—literally crammed—between the canvas and the back of the old wooden case, with scraps of dusty paper.

Ernst Christian Schoeffer felt quite indignant with the perpetrator of this unnecessary mischief.

"The Goth!" he muttered. "This must have been done in Bavaria. I don't believe there is a frame-maker in Ulm who would have been so ignorant of his business."

He laid the picture tenderly aside, and shook out the contents of the empty frame. As he did so, he suddenly changed colour, and began trembling from head to foot.

"Gracious Providence!" he exclaimed aloud, "what is this?"

It was a little bit of yellowish paper that had rolled over towards him from the rest of the heap—a dirty, oblong, yellowish scrap, filled in with several lines of close printing in the middle, and adorned at each corner with a little engraved medallion. He took it up—he laid it down—he snatched it up again. Then he plunged his hands wildly into the midst of the heap, and took up first one little crumpled scrap, then another, then another—then drew the whole heap towards him, and examined it with a strange, frantic, feverish avidity, that was almost terrible in its intensity.

Every one of those papers lying piled before him on the table was a bank-note. There were hundreds of them—hundreds and hundreds: many endorsed with his father's own writing; some Austrian, some Prussian, some Bavarian, some French, some English. And they were as various in their value as in their nationality. epresented sums ranging from one

thaler to five hundred, from a hundred francs to a thousand, from five pounds to fifty.

The half-starved heir to all this wealth felt at first as if he must go mad with joy. He laughed—he cried—he shouted scraps of songs. At length, to sober himself, he plunged his head into a tubful of cold water, and then sat down to add up his money.

It was a complicated task. In order to accomplish it with any degree of accuracy he had to translate the language of each currency into florins; and this was a feat almost beyond his knowledge. Morning at length surprised him asleep in the midst of his riches, his head resting on the table, the pen fallen from his hand, and the sum total still unwritten.

Wolfgang Schoeffer, the bankrupt bookseller, the poverty-stricken inhabitant of the old house on the Graben, had just been a miser after all. Nothing, when one came to think of it, was easier than

for him to accumulate wealth while seeming abjectly poor. His special branch of trade, be it remembered, was the sale of old Bibles, and there are certain very rare and curious old Bibles—such, for instance, as the Coverdale Bible of 1535, with wood-cuts by Hans Sebald Beham—which are, when perfect, of almost incredible value. It came out on inquiry that the painter's father was believed to have known more of this branch of bibliography than any German of his time; that for the last fifteen or twenty years he had been known to all the principal collectors and booksellers of the Continent; that hundreds of precious volumes had passed through his hands; and that, on more than one occasion, he had both received and paid some of the highest prices on record for certain famous early editions.

Perhaps one of the oddest parts of the story lay in the fact that among all the old books which cumbered the house on

the Graben from basement to attic, there was not found one volume of any importance. It appeared to have been his habit to deal, as it were, in only one valuable book at a time, and always to have the book in his own keeping. As soon as he had succeeded in picking up a scarce volume, he knew precisely to whom to take it, and what price to set upon it; and so was ever turning his money, journeying from place to place, and laying up riches of which no living soul in his own native city so much as suspected the existence.

* * * *

Aben Hassan when he woke up that fine morning in Bagdad and found himself Commander of the Faithful, scarcely opened his eyes upon a more astounding change in the aspect of his private affairs than did Ernst Christian Schoeffer when he lifted his head from the midst of his wealth and found the morning sunshine turning all his notes to gold. His brain

was clearer now, and his pulse steadier, than either had been the night before; and again, therefore, he set to work, like the methodical king of the nursery rhyme, "a-counting of his money."

It came, when so counted, to no less a sum than one hundred and twenty-two thousand florins; that is to say, to about ten thousand and two hundred pounds of our good English money.

How the painter deposited his fortune in Herr Schleiermacher's bank; how that excellent gentleman marvelled at the same, and took a quite paternal interest in the young man from that moment; how he invited his dear young friend to dinner that very evening; how Ernst Christian made his appearance in the banker's drawing-room at six o'clock punctually, dressed in a suit of resplendent black, and looking as if he had never known what it was to be hungry or shabby in his life; how the beautiful Salome, grown suddenly quite shy and distant, reduced her lover

in the course of the evening to a state of vassalage more abject than ever; how the story of the picture padded with bank-notes flew through the country and made its appearance in every newspaper where the German tongue was written and spoken; how, finally, before three months of wealth had passed over his head, the painter became the happy husband of his beautiful sitter, are facts which here can receive no more than a passing record. We have given the outline; those who desire to fill it in with detail must seek in Ulm (the cradle of his fame and the centre of his affections) for all that is yet left untold of the story of Ernst Christian Schoeffer.

THE NEW PASS.

THE NEW PASS.

CHAPTER I.

THE circumstances I am about to relate happened just four Autumns ago, when I was travelling in Switzerland with my old school and college friend, Egerton Wolfe.

Before going further, however, I wish to observe that this is no dressed-up narrative. I am a plain, prosaic man, by name Francis Legrice; by profession a barrister; and I think it would be difficult to find many persons less given to look upon life from a romantic or imaginative point of view. By my

enemies, and sometimes, perhaps, by my friends, I am supposed to push my habit of incredulity to the verge of universal scepticism; and indeed I admit that I believe in very little that I do not hear and see for myself. But for these things that I am going to relate, I can vouch; and in so far as mine is a personal narrative, I am responsible for its truth. What I saw, I saw with my own eyes in the broad daylight. I offer nothing, therefore, in the shape of a story; but simply a plain statement of facts, as they happened to myself.

I was travelling, then, in Switzerland with Egerton Wolfe. It was not our first joint long-vacation tour by a good many, but it promised to be our last; for Wolfe was engaged to be married the following Spring to a very beautiful and charming girl, the daughter of a north-country baronet.

He was a handsome fellow, tall, grace-

ful, dark-haired, dark-eyed; a poet, a dreamer, an artist—as thoroughly unlike myself, in short, as one man having arms, legs, and a head, can be unlike another. And yet we suited each other capitally, and were the fastest friends and best travelling companions in the world.

We had begun our holiday on this occasion with a week's idleness at a place which I will call Oberbrunn—a delightful place, wholly Swiss, consisting of one huge wooden building, half water-cure establishment, half hotel; two smaller buildings called *Dépendances;* a tiny church with a bulbous steeple painted green; and a handful of village—all perched together on a breezy mountain-plateau some three thousand feet above the lake and valley. Here, far from the haunts of the British tourist and the Alpine Club-man, we read, smoked, climbed, rose with the dawn, rubbed up our rusty German,

and got ourselves into training for the knapsack work to follow.

At length, our week being up, we started—rather later on the whole than was prudent, for we had a thirty-miles' walk before us, and the sun was already high.

It was a glorious morning, however; the sky flooded with light, and a cool breeze blowing. I see the bright scene now, just as it lay before us when we came down the hotel steps and found our guide waiting for us outside. There were the water-drinkers gathered round the fountain on the lawn; the usual crowd of itinerant vendors of stag-horn ornaments and carved toys in wood and ivory squatted in a semi-circle about the door; some half-dozen barefooted little mountain children running to and fro with wild raspberries for sale; the valley so far below, dotted with hamlets and traversed by a winding stream, like a thread of flashing silver; the black

pine-wood half-way down the slope; the frosted peaks glittering on the horizon.

"*Bon voyage!*" said our good host, Dr. Steigl, with a last hearty shake of the hand.

"*Bon voyage!*" echoed the waiters and miscellaneous hangers-on.

Some three or four of the water-drinkers at the fountain raised their hats—the ragged children pursued us with their wild fruits as far as the gate—and so we departed.

For some distance our path lay along the mountain side, through pine woods and by cultivated slopes where the Indian corn was ripening to gold, and the late hay-harvest was waiting for the mower. Then the path wound gradually downwards—for the valley lay between us and the pass we had laid out for our day's work—and then, through a succession of soft green slopes and ruddy apple-orchards, we came to a blue lake

fringed with rushes, where we hired a boat with a striped awning, like the boats on Lago Maggiore, and were rowed across by a boatman who rested on his oars and sang a *jodel*-song when we were half way across.

Being landed on the opposite bank, we found our road at once begin to trend upwards; and here, as the guide informed us, the ascent of the Höhenhorn might be said to begin.

"This, however, meine Herren," said he, "is only part of the old pass. It is ill-kept; for none but country folks and travellers from Oberbrunn come this way now. But we shall strike the New Pass higher up. A grand road, meine Herren —as fine a road as the Simplon, and good for carriages all the way. It has only been open since the Spring."

"The old pass is good enough for me, anyhow!" said Egerton, crowding a handful of wild forget-me-nots under the

ribbon of his hat. "It's like a stray fragment of Arcadia."

And in truth it was wonderfully lovely and secluded—a mere rugged path winding steeply upwards in a soft green shade, among large forest trees and moss-grown rocks covered with patches of velvety lichen. A little streamlet ran singing beside it all the way—now gurgling deep in ferns and grasses; now feeding a rude trough made of a hollow trunk; now crossing our road like a broken flash of sunlight; now breaking away in a tiny fall and foaming out of sight, only to reappear a few steps further on.

Then overhead, through the close roof of leaves, we saw patches of blue sky and golden shafts of sunshine, and small brown squirrels leaping from bough to bough; and in the deep rich grass on either hand, thick ferns, and red and golden mosses, and blue campanulas, and now and then a little wild strawberry, ruby red. By-and-by, when we had been

following this path for nearly an hour, we came upon a patch of clearing, in the midst of which stood a rough upright monolith, antique, weather-stained, covered with rude carvings like a Runic monument —the primitive boundary-stone between the Cantons of Uri and Unterwalden.

"Let us rest here!" cries Egerton, flinging himself at full length on the grass. "*Eheu, fugaces!*—and the hours are shorter than the years. Why not enjoy them?"

But the guide, whose name is Peter Kauffmann, interposes after the manner of guides in general, and will by no means let us have our own way. There is a mountain inn, he urges, now only five minutes distant—"an excellent little inn, where they sell good red wine." So we yield to fate and Peter Kauffmann and pursue our upward way, coming presently, as he promised and predicted, upon a bright open space and a brown châlet on a shelf of plateau overhanging a giddy

precipice. Here, sitting under a vine-covered trellis built out on the very brink of the cliff, we find three mountaineers discussing a flask of the good red wine aforesaid.

In this picturesque eyrie we made our mid-day halt. A smiling Mädchen brought us coffee, brown bread, and goats'-milk cheese; while our guide, pulling out a huge lump of the dry black bread from his wallet, fraternised with the mountaineers over a half-flask of his favourite vintage.

The men chattered merrily in their half-intelligible patois. We sat silent, looking down into the deep misty valley and across to the great amethyst mountains, streaked here and there with faint blue threads of slender waterfalls.

"There must surely be moments," said Egerton Wolfe after awhile, "when even such men as you, Frank—men of the world, and lovers of it—feel within

them some stirrings of the primitive Adam; some vague longing for that idyllic life of the woods and fields that we dreamers are still, in our inmost souls, insane enough to sigh after as the highest good."

"You mean, don't I sometimes wish to be a Swiss peasant-farmer, with sabots; a goître; a wife without form as regards her person, and void as regards her head; and a crétin grandfather a hundred and three years old? Why, no. I prefer myself as I am."

My friend smiled, and shook his head.

"Why take it for granted," said he, "that no man can cultivate his brains and his paternal acres at the same time? Horace, with none of the adjuncts you name, loved a country life and turned it to immortal poetry.'

"The world has gone round once or twice since then, my dear fellow," I replied, philosophically. "The best poetry comes out of cities now-a-days."

"And the worst. Do you see those avalanches over yonder?"

Following the direction of his eyes, I saw something like a tiny puff of white smoke gliding over the shoulder of a huge mountain on the opposite side of the valley. It was followed by another and another. We could see neither whence they came nor whither they went. We were too far away to hear the sullen thunder of their fall. Silently they flashed into sight, and as silently they vanished.

Wolfe sighed heavily.

"Poor Lawrence!" said he. "Switzerland was his dream. He longed for the Alps as ardently as other men long for money or power."

Lawrence was a younger brother of his whom I had never seen—a lad of great promise whose health had broken down at Addiscombe some ten or twelve years before, and who had soon after died of rapid consumption at Torquay.

"And he never had that longing gratified?"

"Ah, no—he was never out of England. They prescribe bracing climates now, I am told, for lung disease; but not so then. Poor dear fellow! I sometimes fancy he might have lived, if only he had had his heart's desire."

"I would not let such a painful thought enter my head, if I were you," said I, hastily.

"But I can't help it! My mind has been running on poor Lawrence all the morning; and, somehow, the grander the scenery gets, the more I keep thinking how he would have exulted in it. Do you remember those lines by Coleridge, written in the Valley of Chamouni? He knew them by heart. 'Twas the sight of yonder avalanches that reminded me. . . . Well! I will try not to think of these things. Let us change the subject."

Just at this moment, the landlord of the châlet came out—a bright-eyed, voluble

young mountaineer about five or six-and-twenty, with a sprig of Edelweiss in his hat.

"Good day, meine Herren," he said, including all alike in his salute, but addressing himself especially to Wolfe and myself. "Fine weather for travelling—fine weather for the grapes. These Herren are going on by the New Pass? Ach, Herr Gott! a grand work! a wonderful work!—and all begun and completed in less than three years. These Herren see it to-day for the first time? Good. They have probably been over the Tête Noire? No! Over the Splügen? Good—good. If these Herren have been over the Splügen, they can form an idea of the New Pass. The New Pass is very like the Splügen. It has a gallery tunnelled in the solid rock, just like the gallery on the Via Mala, with this difference that the gallery in the New Pass is much longer, and lighted by loop-holes at regular intervals. These Herren will

please to observe the view looking both up and down the pass, before entering the mouth of the tunnel—there is not a finer view in all Switzerland."

"It must be a great advantage to the people hereabouts, having so good a road carried from valley to valley," said I, smiling at his enthusiasm.

"Oh, it is a fine thing for us, mein Herr!" he replied. "And a fine thing for all this part of the Canton. It will bring visitors—floods of visitors! By the way, these Herren must not omit to look out for the waterfall above the gallery. Holy St. Nicholas! the way in which that waterfall has been arranged!"

"Arranged!" echoed Wolfe, who was as much amused as myself. "*Diavolo!* Do you arrange the waterfalls in your country?"

"It was the Herr Becker," said the landlord, unconscious of banter; "the eminent engineer who planned the New Pass. The waterfall, you see, meine

Herren, could not be suffered to follow its old course down the face of the rock through which the gallery is tunnelled, or it would have flowed in at the loopholes and flooded the road. What, therefore, did the Herr Becker do ?"

"Turned the course of the fall, and brought it down a hundred yards further on," said I somewhat impatiently.

"Not so, mein Herr—not so! The Herr Becker attempts nothing so expensive. He permits the fall to keep its old couloir and come down its old way—but instead of letting it wash the outside of the gallery, he pierces the rock in another direction—vertically—behind the tunnel; constructs an artificial shoot, or conduit in the heart of the rock; and brings the fall out *below* the gallery, just where the cliff overhangs the valley. Now what do the English Herren say to that ?"

"That it must certainly be a clever piece of engineering," replied Wolfe.

"And that having rested long enough,

we will push on and see it," added I, glad to cut short the thread of our host's native eloquence.

So we paid our reckoning; took a last look at the view; and, plunging back into the woods, went on our way refreshed.

The path still continued to ascend, till we suddenly came upon a burst of daylight and found ourselves on a magnificent high road some thirty feet in breadth, with the forest and the telegraph wires on the one hand, and the precipice on the other. Massive granite posts at close intervals protected the edge of the road, and the cantonniers were still at work here and there, breaking and laying fresh stones, and clearing débris. We did not need to be informed that this was the New Pass.

Always ascending, we continued now to follow the road which at every turn commanded finer and finer views across the valley. Then by degrees the forest

dwindled, and was at last left far below; and the giddy precipices to our left grew steeper, and the mountain slopes above became more and more barren, till the last Alp-roses vanished and there remained only a carpet of brown and tan moss scattered over here and there with great boulders—some freshly broken away from the heights above—others thickly coated with lichen, as if they might have been lying there for centuries.

We seemed here to have reached the highest point of the New Pass, for our road continued at this barren level for some miles. An immense panorama of peaks, snow-fields, and glaciers lay outstretched before us to the left, with an unfathomable gulf of misty valley between. The hot air simmered in the sun. The heat and silence were intense. Once, and once only, we came upon a party of travellers. They were three in number, lying at full length in the shade of a huge fragment of fallen rock, their heads com-

fortably pillowed on their knapsacks, and all fast asleep.

And now the grey rock began to crop out in larger masses close beside our path, encroaching nearer and nearer, till at last the splintered cliffs towered straight above our heads and the road became a mere broad shelf along the face of the precipice. Presently, on turning a sharp angle of rock, we saw before us a vista of road, cliff, and valley—the road now perceptibly on the decline, and vanishing about a mile ahead into the mouth of a small cavernous opening (no bigger, as it seemed from that distance, than a good-sized rabbit hole) pierced through a huge projecting spur, or buttress, of the mountain.

"Behold the famous gallery!" said I. "Mine host was right—it *is* something like the Splügen, barring the much greater altitude of the road, and the still greater width of the valley. But where is the waterfall?"

"Well, it's not much of a waterfall,"

said Wolfe. "I can just see it—a tiny thread of mist wavering down the cliff a long way on, beyond the mouth of the tunnel."

"Ay; I see it now—a sort of inferior Staubbach. Heavens! what power the sun has up here! At what time did Kauffmann say we should get to Schwartzenfelden?"

"Not before seven, at the earliest—and it is now nearly four."

"Humph! three hours more—say three and a half. Well, that will be a pretty good first day's pedestrianising, heat and all considered!"

Here the conversation dropped, and we plodded on again in silence.

Meanwhile the sun blazed in the heavens, and the light, struck back from white rock and whiter road, was almost blinding. And still the hot air danced and simmered before us; and a windless stillness, as of death, lay upon all the scene.

Suddenly—quite suddenly, as if he had started out of the rock—I saw a man coming towards us with rapid and eager gesticulations. He seemed to be waving us back; but I was so startled for the moment by the unexplained way in which he made his appearance, that I scarcely took in the meaning of his gestures.

"How odd!" I exclaimed, coming to a halt. "How did he get there?"

"How did who get there?" said Wolfe.

"Why, that fellow yonder. Did you see where he came from?"

"What fellow, my dear boy? I see no one but ourselves."

And he stared vaguely round, while all the time the man between us and the gallery was waving his right arm above his head, and running on to meet us.

"Good heavens! Egerton," I said impatiently, "where are your eyes? Here—straight before us—not a quarter of a mile off—making signs as hard as he can.

Perhaps we had better wait till he comes up."

My friend drew his race-glass from its case, adjusted it carefully, and took a long, steady look down the road. Seeing him do this, the man stood still; but kept his right hand up all the same.

"You see him now, surely?" said I.

"*No.*"

I turned and looked him in the face. I could not believe my ears.

"Upon my honour, Frank," he said earnestly, "I see only the empty road and the mouth of the tunnel beyond. Here, Kauffmann!"

Kauffmann, who was standing close by, stepped up and touched his cap.

"Look down the road," said Wolfe.

The guide shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked.

"What do you see?"

"I see the entrance to the gallery, mein Herr."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else, mein Herr."

And still the man stood there in the road—even came a step or two nearer! Was I mad?

"You still think you see some one yonder?" said Egerton, looking at me very seriously.

"I *know* that I do."

He handed me his race-glass.

"Look through that," he said, "and tell me if you still see him."

"I see him more plainly than before."

"What is he like?"

"Very tall—very slender—fair—quite young—not more, I should say, than fifteen or sixteen—evidently an Englishman."

"How is he dressed?"

"In a grey suit—his collar open, and his throat bare. Wears a Scotch cap with a silver badge in it. He takes his cap off, and waves it! He has a whitish scar on his right temple. I can see the motion of his lips—he seems to say, 'Go back!

go back!' Look for yourself—you *must* see him!"

I turned to give him the glass, but he pushed it away.

"No, no," he said, hoarsely. "It's of no use. Go on looking. . . . What more, for God's sake?"

I looked again—the glass all but dropped from my hand.

"Gracious heavens!" I exclaimed breathlessly, "he is gone!"

"Gone!"

Ay, gone. Gone as suddenly as he came—gone as though he had never been! I could not believe it. I rubbed my eyes. I rubbed the glass on my sleeve. I looked, and looked again; and still, though I looked, I doubted.

At this moment, with a wild, unearthly cry, and a strange sound as of some heavy projectile cleaving the stagnant air, an eagle plunged past us upon mighty wings, and swooped down into the valley.

"Ein Adler! ein Adler!" shouted the

guide, flinging up his cap and running to the brink of the precipice.

Wolfe laid his hand upon my arm, and drew a deep breath.

"Legrice," he said very calmly, but with a white, awe-struck look in his face, "you described my brother Lawrence—age, height, dress, everything; even to the Scotch cap he always wore, and the silver badge my uncle Horace gave him on his birthday. He got that scar in a cricket-match at Harrowgate."

"Your brother Lawrence?" I faltered.

"Why you should be the one permitted to see him is strange," he went on, speaking more to himself than to me. "Very strange! I wish . . . but there! perhaps I should not have believed my own eyes. I *must* believe yours."

"I will never believe that my eyes saw your brother Lawrence," I said resolutely.

"We must turn back, of course," he went on, taking no notice of my answer. "Look here, Kauffmann—can we get to

Schwartzenfelden to night by the old pass, if we turn back at once?"

"Turn back!" I interrupted. "My dear Egerton, you are not serious?"

"I was never more serious in my life," he said, gravely.

"If these Herren wish to take the old pass," said the astonished guide, "we cannot get to Schwartzenfelden before midnight. We have already come seven miles out of the way, and the old pass is twelve miles farther round."

"Twelve and fourteen are twenty-six," said I. "We cannot add twenty-six miles to our original thirty. It is out of the question."

"These Herren can sleep at the châlet where we halted," suggested the guide.

"True—I had not thought of that," said Wolfe. "We can sleep at the châlet, and go on as soon as it is day."

"Turn back, sleep at the châlet, go on in the morning, and lose full half a day, with one of the finest passes in Switzer-

land before us, and our journey two-thirds done!" I cried. "The idea is too absurd."

"Nothing shall induce me to go on, in defiance of a warning from the dead," said Wolfe hastily.

"And nothing," I replied, "shall induce me to believe that we have received any such warning. I either saw that man, or I laboured under some kind of optical illusion. But ghosts I do not believe in."

"As you please. You can go on if you prefer it, and take Kauffmann with you. I know my way back."

"Agreed—except as regards Kauffmann. Let him take his choice."

Kauffmann, having the matter explained to him, elected at once to go back with Egerton Wolfe.

"If the Herr Englishman has been warned in a vision," he said, crossing himself devoutly, "it is suicide to go on. Obey the blessed spirit, mein Herr!"

But nothing now would have induced

me to turn back, even if I had felt inclined to do so; so, agreeing to meet next day at Schwartzenfelden, my friend and I said good-bye.

"God grant you may come to no harm, dear old fellow," said Wolfe, as he turned away.

"I don't feel like harm, I assure you," I replied, laughing.

And so we parted.

I stood still and watched them till they were out of sight. At the turn of the road they paused and looked back. When Wolfe waved his hand for the last time and finally disappeared, I could not repress a sudden thrill—he looked so like the figure of my illusion!

For that it was an illusion, I did not doubt for a moment. Such phenomena, though not common, are by no means unheard-of. I had talked with more than one eminent physician on this very subject, and I remembered that each had spoken of cases within his own experience.

Besides, there was the famous case of Nicolai, the bookseller of Berlin; not to mention many others, equally well attested. That I must have been temporarily in the condition of persons so affected, I took for granted; and yet I felt well—never better; my head cool—my mind clear—my pulse regular. Well—I would never disbelieve in hallucinations again. To that I made up my mind; but as for ghosts . . . pshaw! how could any sane man, above all, such a man as Egerton Wolfe, believe in ghosts?

Reasoning thus, and smiling to myself, I tightened the shoulder-straps of my knapsack, took a pull at my wine-flask, and set off towards the tunnel.

It was still half a mile distant; for I had stopped on first sight of the figure, before we were half across the space that lay between that dark opening and the turn of the road above. And now, plodding steadily towards it, I examined the ground at every step (especially on

the side of the precipice) for any path or rocky projection of which a man could possibly have availed himself for retreat or shelter; but the smooth upright wall of solid limestone on the one hand, and the sheer, inaccessible, giddy depths on the other, made all such explanation impossible. Thrown back thus on the illusion theory, I paused once or twice, and tried to conjure up the figure before my eyes, but in vain.

And now with every step that I took the mouth of the tunnel grew larger, and the depth of shade within it blacker and more mysterious. I was by this time near enough to see that it was faced with brickwork—that it spanned the full width of the road—and that it was more than lofty enough for an old-fashioned, top-heavy diligence to pass under it. The next moment, being within half a dozen yards of it, I distinctly heard the cool murmur of the more distant waterfall (now hidden by the great mountain spur

through which the gallery was carried); and the next moment after that, I had plunged into the tunnel.

It was like the transition from an orchid-house to an ice-house—from mid-day to midnight. The darkness was profound, and so intense the sudden chill, that for the first second it almost took my breath away.

The roof and sides of the gallery, and the road beneath my feet, were all hewn in the solid rock. A sharp, arrowy gleam of light, shooting athwart the gloom about fifty yards ahead, marked the position of the first loop-hole. A second, a third, a fourth, as many perhaps as eight or ten, gleamed faintly in the distance. The tiny blue speck which showed where the gallery opened out again upon the day, looked at least a mile away. The path underfoot was wet and slippery; and as I went on, my eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, I saw that every part of the tunnel was streaming with moisture.

I pushed on rapidly. The first and second loop-holes were soon left behind, but at the third I paused to breathe the outer air. Then, for the first time, I observed that every rut in the road beneath my feet was filled with running water.

I hurried on faster and faster. I shivered. I felt the cold seizing me. The arched entrance through which I had just passed had dwindled already to a shining patch no bigger than my hand, while the tiny blue speck on ahead seemed far off as ever. Meanwhile the tunnel was dripping like a shower-bath.

All at once, my attention was arrested by a sound — a strange indescribable sound — heavy, muffled, as of mighty forces at work in the heart of the mountain. I stood still—I held my breath—I fancied I felt the solid rock vibrate beneath my feet! Then it flashed upon me that I must now be approaching that part of the gallery behind which the

waterfall was conducted, and that what I heard was the muffled roar of its descent. At the same moment, chancing to look down at my feet, I saw that the road was an inch deep in running water from wall to wall.

Now, lawyer as I am, and ignorant of the first principles of civil engineering, I felt sure that this much-praised Herr Becker should, at least, have made his tunnel water-tight. That it leaked somewhere was plain, and that it should be suffered to go on leaking to the discomfort of travellers was simply intolerable. An inch of water, for instance, was more than . . . . an inch did I say? Gracious heavens! since the moment I looked, it had risen to three—it was closing over my boots—it was becoming a rushing torrent!

In that instant a great horror fell upon me—the horror of darkness and sudden death. I turned, flung away my Alpenstock, and fled for my life. Fled blindly,

breathlessly, wildly, with the horrible grinding sound of the imprisoned waterfall in my ears, and the gathering torrent at my heel!

Never while I live shall I forget the agony of those next few seconds—the icy numbness seizing on my limbs—the sudden, frightful sense of impeded respiration—the water rising, eddying, clamouring, pursuing me, passing me—the swirl of it, as it flashed past each loop-hole in succession—the rush with which (as I strained on to the mouth of the gallery, now not a dozen yards distant) it leaped out into the sunlight like a living thing, and dashed to the edge of the precipice!

At that supreme instant, just as I had darted out through the echoing arch and staggered a few paces up the road, a deafening report, crackling, hurried, tremendous, like the explosion of a mine, rent the air and roused a hundred echoes. It was followed by a moment of strange and terrible suspense. Then, with a deep

and sullen roar, audible above all the rolling thunders of the mountains round, a mighty wave — smooth, solid, glassy, like an Atlantic wave on an English western coast—came gleaming up the mouth of the tunnel, paused as it were, upon the threshold, reared its majestic crest, curved, trembled, burst in a cataract of foam, flooded the road for yards beyond the spot where I was clinging to the rock like a limpet, and rushing back again, as the wave rushes down the beach, hurled itself over the cliff, and vanished in a cloud of mist.

After this, the imprisoned flood came pouring out tumultuously for several minutes, bringing with it fragments of rock and masonry, and filling the road with débris; but even this disturbance presently subsided, and almost as soon as the last echoes of the explosion had died away, the liberated waters were rippling pleasantly along their new bed, sparkling out into the sunshine as they emerged

from the gallery, and gliding in a smooth continuous stream over the brink of the precipice, thence to fall, in multitudinous wavy folds and wreaths of prismatic mist, into the valley two thousand feet below.

For myself, drenched to the skin as I was, I could do nothing but turn back and follow meekly in the track of Egerton Wolfe and Peter Kauffmann. How I did so, dripping and weary, and minus my Alpenstock; how I arrived at the châlet about sunset, shivering and hungry, just in time to claim my share of a capital omelette and a dish of mountain trout; how the Swiss press rang with my escape for, at least, nine days after the event; how the Herr Becker was liberally censured for his defective engineering; and how Egerton Wolfe believes to this day that his brother Lawrence came back from the dead to save us from utter destruction, are matters upon which it were needless to dwell in these pages. Enough that I narrowly escaped with my life, and

that had we gone on, as we doubtless should have gone on but for the delay consequent upon my illusion, we should most probably have been in the heart of the tunnel at the time of the explosion, and not one left to tell the tale.

Nevertheless, my dear friends, I do not believe, and I have made up my mind never to believe—in ghosts.

A SERVICE OF DANGER.

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CHAPTER I.

I, FREDERICK GEORGE BYNG, who write this narrative with my own hand, without help of spectacles, am so old a man that I doubt if I now have a hundred living contemporaries in Europe. I was born in 1780, and I am eighty-nine years of age. My reminiscences date so far back that I almost feel, when I speak of them, as if I belonged to another world. I remember when news first reached England of the taking of the Bastille in 1789. I remember when people, meeting each other in the streets, talked of Danton

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and Robespierre, and the last victims of the guillotine. I remember how our whole household was put into black for the execution of Louis XVI., and how my mother who was a devout Roman Catholic, converted her oratory for several days into a *chapelle ardente*. That was in 1793, when I was just thirteen years of age.

Three years later, when the name of General Bonaparte was fast becoming a word of power in European history, I went abroad, and influenced by considerations which have nothing to do with my story, entered the Austrian army.

A younger son of a younger branch of an ancient and noble house, and distantly connected, moreover, with more than one great Austrian family, I presented myself at the Court of Vienna under peculiarly favourable auspices. The Archduke Charles, to whom I brought letters of recommendation, accorded me a gracious welcome, and presented me almost immediately upon my arrival with a commission

in a cavalry corps commanded by a certain Colonel von Beust, than whom a more unpopular officer did not serve in the Imperial army.

Hence, I was glad to exchange, some months later, into Lichtenstein's Cuirassiers. In this famous corps which was commanded by his uncle the Prince of Lichtenstein, my far-off cousin, Gustav von Lichtenstein, had lately been promoted to a troop. Serving in the same corps, sharing the same hardships, incurring the same dangers, we soon became sworn friends and comrades. Together we went through the disastrous campaign of 1797, and together enjoyed the brief interval of peace that followed upon the treaty of Campo Formio and the cession of Venice. Having succeeded in getting our leave of absence at the same time, we then travelled through Styria and Hungary. Our tour ended, we came back together to winter quarters in Vienna.

When hostilities were renewed in 1800,

we joyfully prepared to join the army of the Inn. In peace or war, at home or abroad, we two held fast by each other. Let the world go round as it might, we at least took life gaily, accepted events as they came, and went on becoming truer and stauncher friends with every passing day. Never were two men better suited. We understood each other perfectly. We were nearly of the same age; we enjoyed the same sports, read the same books, and liked the same people. Above all, we were both passionately desirous of military glory, and we both hated the French.

Gustav von Lichtenstein, however, was in many respects, both physically and mentally, my superior. He was taller than myself, a finer horseman, a swifter runner, a bolder swimmer, a more graceful dancer. He was unequivocally better-looking; and having to great natural gifts superadded a brilliant University career at both Göttingen and Leipsig, he was as unequivocally better educated. Fair-haired,

blue-eyed, athletic—half dreamer and poet, half sportsman and soldier—now lost in mists of speculative philosophy—now given up with keen enthusiasm to military studies—the idol of his soldiers—the *beau sabreur* of his corps—Gustav von Lichtenstein was then, and has ever since remained, my ideal of a true and noble gentleman. An orphan since his early childhood, he owned large estates in Franconia, and was, moreover, his uncle's sole heir. He was just twenty when I first came to know him personally in Vienna in 1796; but his character was already formed, and he looked at least four years older than his age. When I say that he was even then, in accordance with a family arrangement of long standing, betrothed to his cousin, Constance von Adelheim, a rich and beautiful Franconian heiress, I think I shall have told all that need be told of my friend's private history.

I have said that we were rejoiced by the

renewal of hostilities in 1800; and we had good reason to rejoice, he as an Austrian, I as an Englishman; for the French were our bitterest enemies, and we were burning to wipe out the memory of Marengo. It was in the month of November that Gustav and I received orders to join our regiment; and, commanded by Prince Lichtenstein in person, we at once proceeded, in great haste and very inclement weather, to fall in with the main body of the Imperial forces near Landshut on the Inn. The French, under Moreau, came up from the direction of Ampfing and Mühldorf; while the Austrians, sixty thousand strong, under the Archduke John, advanced upon them from Dorfen.

Coming upon the French by surprise in the close neighbourhood of Ampfing on the 30th, we fell upon them while in line of march, threw them into confusion, and put them to the rout. The next day they fell back upon that large plateau which

lies between the Isar and the Inn, and took up their position in the forest of Hohenlinden. We ought never to have let them so fall back. We ought never to have let them entrench themselves in the natural fastnesses of that immense forest which has been truly described as "a great natural stockade between six and seven leagues long, and from a league to a league and a half broad."

We had already achieved a brilliant *coup*, and had our General known how to follow up his success, the whole fortune of the campaign would in all probability have been changed. But the Archduke John, though a young man of ability and sound military training, wanted that boldness which comes of experience, and erred on the side of over-caution.

All that day (the 2nd of December) it rained and sleeted in torrents. An icy wind chilled us to the bone. We could not keep our camp-fires alight. Our soldiers, however, despite the dreadful state of the

weather, were in high spirits, full of yesterday's triumph, and longing for active work. Officers and men alike, we all confidently expected to be on the heels of the enemy soon after daybreak, and waited impatiently for the word of command. But we waited in vain. At midday the Archduke summoned a council of his generals. But the council by-and-by broke up; the afternoon wore on; the early Winter dusk closed in; and nothing was done.

That night there was discontent in the camp. The officers looked grave. The men murmured loudly, as they gathered round the sputtering embers and tried in vain to fence off the wind and rain. By-and-by the wind ceased blowing and the rain ceased falling, and it began to snow.

At midnight, my friend and I were sitting together in our little tent, trying to kindle some damp logs, and talking over the day's disappointment.

"It is a brilliant opportunity lost,"

said Gustav, bitterly. "We had separated them and thrown them into confusion; but what of that, when we have left them this whole day to reassemble their scattered forces and reform their broken battalions? The Archduke Charles would never have been guilty of such an oversight. He would have gone on forcing them back, column upon column, till soon they would have been unable to fly before us. They would have trampled upon each other, thrown down their arms, and been all cut to pieces or taken prisoners."

"Perhaps it is not yet too late," said I.

"Not yet too late!" he repeated. "*Gott im Himmel!* Not too late, perhaps, to fight hard and get the worst of the fight; but too late to destroy the whole French army, as we should have destroyed it this morning. But, there! of what use is it to talk? They are all safe now in the woods of Hohenlinden."

"Well, then, we must rout them out of the woods of Hohenlinden, as we

routed the wild boars last Winter in Franconia," I said, smiling.

But my friend shook his head.

"Look here," he said, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, and, with a few bold strokes, sketching a rough plan of the plateau and the two rivers. "The forest is pierced by only two great roads —the road from Munich to Wasserburg, and the road from Munich to Mühldorf. Between the roads, some running transversely, some in parallel lines, are numbers of narrow footways, known only to the peasants, and impassable in Winter. If the French have had recourse to the great thoroughfares, they have passed through ere this, and taken up their position on some good ground beyond; but if they have thrown themselves into the forest on either side, they are either taking refuge in thickets whence it will be impossible to dislodge them, or they are lying in wait to fall upon our columns when we attempt to march through."

I was struck by the clearness of his insight and his perfect mastery of the situation.

"What a general you will make by-and-by, Lichtenstein!" I exclaimed.

"I shall never live to be a general, my dear fellow," he replied gloomily. "Have I not told you before now that I shall die young?"

"Pshaw!—a mere presentiment!"

"Ay—a mere presentiment; but a presentiment of which you will some day see the fulfilment."

I shook my head and smiled incredulously; but Lichtenstein, stooping over the fire, and absorbed in his own thoughts, went on, more, as it were, to himself than to me.

"Yes," he said, "I shall die before I have done anything for which it might be worth while to have lived. I am conscious of power—I feel there is the making of a commander in me—but what chance have I? The times are rich in great soldiers

. . . . Ah, if I could but once distinguish myself—if I could but achieve one glorious deed before I die! . . . My uncle could help me if he would. He could so easily appoint me to some service of danger; but he will not—it is in vain to ask him. There was last year's expedition—you remember how I implored him to let me lead an assaulting party at Mannheim. He refused me. Von Ranke got it, and covered himself with glory! Now if we do have a battle to-morrow" . . . .

"Do you really think we shall have a battle to-morrow?" I said eagerly.

"I fancy so; but who can answer for what the Archduke may do? Were we not confident of fighting to-day?"

"Yes—but the Prince of Lichtenstein was at the council."

"My uncle tells me nothing," replied Gustav, drily.

And then he went to the door of the tent and looked out. The snow was still coming down in a dense drifting cloud,

and, notwithstanding the heavy rains of the last few days, was already beginning to lie upon the ground.

"Pleasant weather for a campaign!" said Gustav. "I vote we get a few hours' sleep while we can."

And with this he wrapped himself up in his cloak and lay down before the fire. I followed his example, and in a few moments we were both fast asleep.

Next day—the memorable 3rd of December A.D. 1800—was fought the famous battle of Hohenlinden; a day great and glorious in the annals of French military history, yet not inglorious for those who bravely suffered defeat and disaster.

I will not attempt to describe the conflict in detail—that has been done by abler pens than mine. It will be enough if I briefly tell what share we Lichtensteiners bore in the fray. The bugles sounded to arms before daylight, and by grey dawn the whole army was in motion. The snow was still falling heavily; but the men

were in high spirits and confident of victory.

Divided into three great colums—the centre commanded by the Archduke, the right wing under Latour, and the left under Riesch—we plunged into the forest. The infantry marched first, followed by the artillery and caissons, and the cavalry brought up the rear. The morning, consequently, had far advanced, and our comrades in the van had already reached the farther extremity of the forest, when we, with the rest of the cavalry, crossed, if I may so express it, the threshold of those fatal woods.

The snow was now some fourteen inches deep upon the ground, and still falling in such thick flakes as made it impossible to see twenty yards ahead. The gloomy pine-trees closed round our steps in every direction, thick-set, uniform, endless. Except the broad *chaussée*, down which the artillery was lumbering slowly and noiselessly, no paths or side-tracks were distinguish-

able. Below, all was white and dazzling; above, where the wide-spreading pine-branches roofed out the leaden sky, all was dark and oppressive. Presently the Prince of Lichtenstein rode up, and bade us turn aside under the trees on either side of the road till Kollowrath's reserves had passed on. We did so; dismounted; lit our pipes; and waited till our turn should come to follow the rest.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, as if they had sprung from the earth, an immense body of the enemy's foot poured in upon us from the very direction in which our left wing, under Riesch, had lately passed along. In an instant the air was filled with shouts, and smoke, and shots, and gleaming sabres—the snow was red with blood—men, horses and artillery were massed together in inextricable confusion, and hundreds of our brave fellows were cut down before they could even draw their swords to strike a single blow.

"Call up the Bavarian reserve!" shouted

the Prince, sitting his horse like a statue and pointing up the road with his sword.

The next instant I was rolling under my own horse's feet, with a murderous grip upon my throat, a pistol at my head, and in my ears a sound like the rushing of a mighty sea. After this I remember nothing more, till by-and-by I came to my senses, and found myself, with some five or six wounded cuirassiers, lying in an open cart, and being transported along a country road apparently skirting the forest. I thought at first that I also was wounded and that we were all prisoners, and so closed my eyes in despair.

But as the tide of consciousness continued to flow back, I discovered that we were in the care of our own people, and in the midst of a long string of ambulances bringing up the rear of the Imperial army. And I also found that, more fortunate than my companions, I had been stunned and badly bruised, but was otherwise unhurt.

Presently Gustav came riding up, and with a cry of joy exclaimed :—

"How now, *lieber Freund!* No broken bones? All well and safe this time?"

"All well and safe," I replied; "but sore from head to foot, and jolted almost to death. Where's my horse, I wonder?"

"Dead, no doubt; but if you can ride, take mine, and I'll secure the first I can get."

"Is the battle over?"

He shook his head.

"Ay," he said, gloomily. "The battle is over—and lost."

"Lost!—utterly?"

"Utterly."

And then, still riding beside the cart and bending towards me as he rode, he told, in a few bitter sentences, all he knew of the day's diaster.

Moreau, with Generals Grouchy and Grandjean, had, it seemed, lain in wait with the main body of his army at the farther end of the forest, where the great

Munich and Wasserburg road debouches upon the open plain, in order to drive our forces back as soon as the heads of the first columns should emerge on that side; while Ney, prepared to execute a similar manœuvre with his division, was stationed for the same purpose at the mouth of the other great *chaussée*.

Richepanse, meanwhile, separated by an accident from half his brigade, instead of retreating, advanced with great intrepidity, and fell upon us flank and rear, as I have said, when we least expected danger. Thus it was that the Imperial army was attacked and driven back upon itself from three points, and defeated with great slaughter.

"As for our losses," said Lichtenstein, "Heaven only knows what they are! It seems to me that we have scarcely a gun or a baggage-waggon left; while our men, herded together, trampled, cut down by thousands—*Herr Gott*! I cannot bear to think of it."

That night we retired across the Inn and halted upon the Tyrolean side, making some show of defence along the line of the river, in the direction of Saltzburg. Our men, however, had none of the spirit of resistance left in them. They seemed as if crushed by the magnitude of their defeat. Hundreds deserted daily. The rest clamoured impatiently for a retreat. The whole camp was in dismay and disorder.

Suddenly, none could exactly tell how, a rumour went about that Moreau was about to attempt the passage of the Lower Inn.

This rumour soon became more definite.

The point chosen was distant some three or four marches from that where we were now posted.

All the boats upon the Isar had been seized and sent down the river as far as Munich.

From Munich they were about to be

transported overland to the nearest point upon the Inn.

Two bridges of boats were then to be thrown across the river, and the French battalions were to march over to our attack.

Such was the information which the peasantry brought to our camp, and which was confirmed by the scouts whom we sent out in every direction. The enemy's movements were open and undisguised. Confident of success and secure in our weakness, he disdained even the semblance of strategy.

On the 4th of December the Archduke called another council of war; and some hours before daybreak on the morning of the 5th, our whole right wing was despatched to the point at which we anticipated an attack.

At dawn, Gustav, who had been out all night on duty, came in wet and weary, and found me still asleep.

"Rouse up dreamer!" he said. "Our

comrades are gone, and now we can sing '*De Profundis*' for ourselves."

"Why for ourselves?" I asked, raising myself upon my elbow.

"Because Riesch is gone; and, if I am not very much mistaken, we shall have to fight the French without him."

"What do you mean? Riesch is gone to repulse the threatened attack down the river!"

"I mean that my mind misgives me about that attack. Moreau is not wont to show his cards so plainly. I have been thinking about it all night; and the more I think of it, the more I suspect that the French have laid a trap, and the Archduke has walked into it."

And then, while we lit our fire and breakfasted together off our modest rations of black bread and soup, my friend showed me, in a few words, how unlikely it was that Moreau should conduct any important operation in so ostentatious a fashion. His object, argued Lichtenstein,

was either to mislead us with false rumours, and then, in the absence of Riesch's division, to pour across the river and attack us unexpectedly, or, more probably still, it was his design to force the passage of the Upper Inn and descend upon us from the hills in our rear.

I felt a sudden conviction that he was right.

"It is so—it must be so!" I exclaimed. "What is to be done?"

"Nothing—unless to die hard when the time comes."

"Will you not lay your suspicions before the Archduke?"

"The Archduke would not thank me, perhaps, for seeing farther than himself. Besides, suspicions are nothing. If I had proof—proof positive .... if my uncle would but grant me a party of reconnoissance .... By Heaven! I will ask him."

"Then ask him one thing more—get leave for me to go with you!"

At this moment three or four drums

struck up the *rappel*—were answered by others—and again by others far and near, and in a few seconds the whole camp was alive and stirring. In the meanwhile, Lichtenstein snatched up his cap and rushed away, eager to catch the Prince before he left his tent.

In about half an hour he came back, radiant with success. His uncle had granted him a troop of twenty men, with permission to cross the Inn and reconnoitre the enemy's movements.

"But he will not consent to let thee join, *mein Bruder*," said Gustav, regretfully.

"Why not?"

"Because it is a service of danger, and he will not risk the life of a second officer when one is enough."

"Pshaw! as if my life were worth anything! But there—it's just my luck. I might have been certain he would refuse. When do you go?"

"At midday. We are to keep on this

side, following the road to Neubevern till we find some point narrow enough to swim our horses over. After that, we shall go round by any unfrequented ways and bridle-paths we can find; get near the French camp as soon as it is dusk; and find out all we can."

"I'd have given my black mustang to be allowed to go with you."

"I don't half forgive the Prince for refusing," said Gustav. "But then, you see, not a man of us may come back; and after all, it's more satisfactory to get one's bullet on the open battle-field than to be caught and shot for a spy."

"I should prefer to take my chance of that."

"I am not quite sure that I should prefer it for you," said my friend. "I have gained my point—I am glad to go: but I have an impression of coming disaster."

"Ah! you know I don't believe in presentiments."

"I do know it, of old. But the sons of the house of Lichtenstein have reason to believe in them. I could tell you many a strange story if I had time .... But it is already ten, and I must write some letters and put my papers in order before I start."

With this he sat down to his desk, and I went out, in order to leave him alone while he wrote. When I came back, his charger was waiting outside in care of an orderly; the troop had already assembled in an open space behind the tent; and the men were busy tightening their horses' girths, looking to the locks of their pistols, and gaily preparing to be gone.

I found Lichtenstein booted and spurred and ready. A letter and a sealed packet lay upon the table, and he had just opened the locker to take a slice of bread and a glass of *kirschwasser* before starting.

"Thank heaven you are come!" he

said. "In three minutes more I should have been gone. You see this letter and packet?—I entrust them to you. The packet contains my watch, which was my father's, given to him by the Empress Catherine of Russia; my hereditary star and badge as a Count of the early Roman Empire; my will; my commission; and my signet ring. If I fall to-day, the packet is to be given to my uncle. The letter is for Constance, bidding her farewell. I have enclosed in it my mother's portrait and a piece of my hair. You will forward it, *lieber Freund* . . . ."

"I will."

He took a locket from his bosom, opened it, kissed it, and gave it to me with a sigh.

"I would not have her portrait fall into rude and sacrilegious hands," he said; "if I never come back, destroy it. And now for a parting glass, and good bye!"

We then chinked our glasses together,

drank to each other in silence, clasped hands, and parted.

Away they rode through the heavy mire and beating rain, twenty picked men, two and two, with their Captain at their head. I watched them as they trotted leisurely down the long line of tents, and when the last man had disappeared, I went in with a heavy heart, telling myself that I should perhaps never see Gustav von Lichtenstein again.

Throughout the rest of the day it continued to rain incessantly. It was my turn that night to be on duty for five hours; to go the round of the camp, and to visit all the outposts. I therefore made up the best fire I could, stopped indoors, and, following my friend's example, wrote letters all the afternoon.

About six in the evening the rain ceased, and it began to snow. It was just the Hohenlinden weather over again.

At eight, having cooked and eaten my solitary supper, I wrapped myself in my rug, lay down before the fire, and slept till midnight, when the orderly came, as usual, to wake me and accompany me on my rounds.

"Dreadful weather, I suppose, Fritz?" I said, getting up unwillingly, and preparing to face the storm.

"No, *mein Herr;* it is a beautiful night."

I could hardly believe him.

But so it was. The camp lay around us, one sheet of smooth dazzling snow; the clouds had parted, and were clearing off rapidly in every direction; and just over the Archduke's tent where the Imperial banner hung drooping and heavy, the full moon was rising in splendour.

A magnificent night—cold, but not piercing—pleasant to ride in—pleasant to smoke in as one rode. A superb night for trotting leisurely round about a peace-

ful camp; but a bad night for a reconnoitring party on hostile ground,—a fatal night for Austrian white-coats in danger of being seen by vigilant French sentries.

Where now were Gustav and his troop? What had they done? What had happened since they left? How soon would they come back? I asked myself these questions incessantly.

I could think of nothing else. I looked at my watch every few minutes. As the time wore on, the hours appeared to grow longer. At two o'clock, before I had gone half my round, it seemed to me that I had been all night in the saddle. From two to three, from three to four, the hours dragged by as if every minute were weighted with lead.

"The Graf von Lichtenstein will be coming back this way, *mein Herr*," said the orderly, spurring his horse up beside mine, and saluting with his hand to the side of his helmet as he spoke.

"Which way? Over the hill, or down in the hollow?"

"Through the hollow, *mein Herr*. That is the road by which the Herr Graf rode out; and the river is too wide for them to cross anywhere but up-stream."

"Then they must come this way?"

"Yes, *mein Herr*."

We were riding along the ridge of a long hill, one side of which sloped down towards the river, while on the other side it terminated in an abrupt precipice overhanging a narrow road or ravine, some forty feet below. The opposite bank was also steep, though less steep than that on our side; and beyond it the eye travelled over a wide expanse of dusky pine-woods, now white and heavy with snow.

I reined in my horse the better to observe the scene. Yonder flowed the Inn, dark and silent, a river of ink winding through meadow flats of dazzling silver. Far away upon the horizon rose the mystic

outlines of the Franconian Alps. A single sentry, pacing to and fro some four hundred yards ahead, was distinctly visible in the moonlight; and such was the perfect stillness of the night that, although the camp lay at least two miles and a half away, I could hear the neighing of the horses and the barking of the dogs.

Again I looked at my watch, again calculated how long my friend had been absent. It was now a quarter past four A.M., and he had left the camp at midday.

If he had not yet returned—and of course he might have done so at any moment since I had been out on duty—he had now been gone sixteen hours and a quarter.

Sixteen hours and a quarter! Time enough to have ridden to Munich and back!

The orderly again brought his horse up abreast with mine.

"Pardon, *mein Herr*," he said, pointing up the ravine with his sabre; "but do

you see nothing yonder—beyond the turn of the road—just where there is a gap in the trees?"

I looked; but I saw nothing.

"What do you think you see?" I asked him.

"I scarcely know, *mein Herr*;—something moving close against the trees, beyond the hollow way."

"Where the road emerges upon the plain and skirts the pine-woods?"

"Yes, *mein Herr*; several dark objects —Ah! they are horsemen!"

"It is the Graf von Lichtenstein and his troop!" I exclaimed.

"Nay, *mein Herr*; see how slowly they ride, and how they keep close under the shade of the woods! The Graf von Lichtenstein would not steal back so quietly."

I stood up in my stirrups, shaded my eyes with my hand, and stared eagerly at the approaching cavalcade.

They were perhaps half-a-mile away as

the crow flies, and would not have been visible from this point but for a long gap in the trees on this side of the hill. I could see that they were soldiers, They might be French; but, somehow, I did not think they were. I fancied, I hoped, they were our own Lichtensteiners come back again.

"They are making for the hollow way, *mein Herr*," said the orderly.

They were evidently making for the hollow way. I watched them past the gap till the last man had gone by, and it seemed to me they were about twenty in number.

I dismounted, flung my reins to the orderly, and went to where the edge of the precipice overhung the road below. Hence, by means of such bushes and tree-stumps as were rooted in the bank, I clambered down a few feet lower, and there lay concealed till they should pass through.

It now seemed to me that they would

never come. I do not know how long I waited. It might have been ten minutes —it might have been half an hour; but the time that elapsed between the moment when I dismounted and the moment when the first helmet came in sight seemed interminable.

The road, as I have already said, lay between a steep declivity on the one side and a less abrupt height, covered with pine-trees, on the other—a picturesque winding gorge or ravine, half dark as night, half bright as day; here deep in shadow, there flooded with moonlight; and carpeted a foot deep with fresh-fallen snow. After I had waited and watched till my eyes ached with staring in the gloom, I at last saw a single horseman coming round the turn of the road, about a hundred yards from the spot where I was lying. Slowly, and as it seemed to me, dejectedly, he rode in advance of his comrades. The rest followed, two and two.

At the first glance, while they were yet in

deep shadow, and, as I have said, a hundred yards distant, I recognised the white cloaks and plumes and the black chargers of my own corps. I knew at once that it was Lichtenstein and his troop.

Then a sudden terror fell upon me. Why were they coming back so slowly? What evil tidings did they bring? How many were returning? How many were missing? I knew well, if there had been a skirmish, who was sure to have been foremost in the fight. I knew well, if but three or four had fallen, who was sure to be one of the fallen.

These thoughts flashed upon me in the first instant when I recognised the Lichtenstein uniform. I could not have uttered a word, or have done anything to attract the men's attention, if it had been to save my life. Dread paralyzed me.

Slowly, dejectedly, noiselessly, the first cuirassier emerged into the moonlight, passed on again into the gloom, and vanished in the next turn of the road. It

was but for a moment that the moonlight streamed full upon him; yet in that moment I saw there had been a fray, and that the man had been badly wounded.

As slowly, as dejectedly, as noiselessly, with broken plumes and battered helmets, and cloaks torn and blood-stained, the rest came after, two and two; each pair, as they passed, shining out momentarily, distinctly, like the images projected for an instant upon the disc of a magic-lantern.

I held my breath and counted them as they went by—first one alone; then two and two, till I had counted eighteen riding in pairs. Then one alone, bringing up the rear. Then . . . .

I waited—I watched—I refused to believe that this could be all. I refused to believe that Gustav must not presently come galloping up to overtake them. At last, long after I knew it was in vain to wait and watch longer, I clambered up again—cramped, and cold, and sick at heart—and found the orderly walking the

horses up and down on the brow of the hill. The man looked me in the face, as if he would fain have asked me what I had seen.

"It was the Graf von Lichtenstein's troop," I said, by an effort; "but—but the Graf von Lichtenstein is not with them."

And with this I sprang into the saddle, clapped spurs to my horse, and said no more.

I had still two outposts to visit before finishing my round; but from that moment to this I have never been able to remember any one incident of my homeward ride. I visited those outposts, without doubt; but as I was as unconscious of the performance of my duty as a sleeper is unconscious of the act of breathing.

Gustav was the only man missing. Gustav was dead. I repeated it to myself over and over again. I felt that it was true. I had no hope that he was taken prisoner. No—he was dead. He had

fallen, fighting to the last. He had died like a hero. But—he was dead.

At a few minutes after five, I returned to the camp. The first person I met was Von Blumenthal, the Prince of Lichtenstein's secretary. He was walking up and down outside my tent, waiting for me. He ran to me as I dismounted.

"Thank heaven you are come!" he said. "Go at once to the prince—the Graf von Lichtenstein is dying. He has fought a troop of French lancers three times as many as his own, and carried off a bundle of despatches. But he has paid for them with his life, and with the lives of all his men. He rode in, covered with wounds, a couple of hours ago, and had just breath enough left to tell the tale."

"His own life, and the lives of all his men!" I repeated hoarsely.

"Yes, he left every man on the field—himself the only survivor. He cut his way out with the captured despatches in one hand and his sword in the other—

and there he lies in the Prince's tent—dying."

* * * *

He was unconscious—had been unconscious ever since he was laid upon his uncle's bed—and he died without again opening his eyes or uttering a word. I saw him breathe his last, and that was all. Even now, old man as I am, I cannot dwell upon that scene. He was my first friend, and I may say my best friend. I have known other friendships since then; but none so intimate—none so precious.

But now comes a question which I yet ask myself "many a time and oft," and which, throughout all the years that have gone by since that night, I have never yet been able to answer. Gustav von Lichtenstein met and fought a troop of French Lancers; saw his own twenty cuirassiers cut to pieces before his eyes; left them all for dead upon a certain hillside on the opposite bank of the Inn; and

rode back into camp, covered with wounds —the only survivor!

What, then, was that silent cavalcade that I saw riding through the hollow way —twenty men without their leader? Were those the dead whom I met, and was it the one living man who was absent?

A NIGHT ON THE

BORDERS OF THE BLACK FOREST.

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MY story (if story it can be called, being an episode in my own early life) carries me back to a time when the world and I were better friends than we are likely, perhaps, ever to be again. I was young then. I had good health, good spirits, and tolerably good looks. I had lately come into a snug little patrimony, which I have long since dissipated; and I was in love, or fancied myself in love, with a charming coquette, who afterwards threw me over for a West-country baronet with seven thousand a year.

So much for myself. The subject is not one that I particularly care to dwell upon; but as I happen to be the hero of my own narrative, some sort of self-introduction is, I suppose, necessary.

To begin then—Time: seventeen years ago.

Hour:—three o'clock p.m., on a broiling, cloudless September afternoon.

Scene:—a long, straight, dusty road, bordered with young trees; a far-stretching, undulating plain, yellow for the most part with corn-stubble; singularly barren of wood and water; sprinkled here and there with vineyards, farmsteads, and hamlets; and bounded in the extreme distance by a low chain of purple hills.

Place—a certain dull, unfrequented district in the little kingdom of Würtemberg, about twelve miles north of Heilbronn, and six south-east of the Neckar.

Dramatis Personæ:—myself, tall, sunburnt, dusty; in grey suit, straw hat,

knapsack and gaiters. In the distance, a broad-backed pedestrian wielding a long stick like an old English quarter-staff.

Now, not being sure that I took the right turning at the cross-roads a mile or two back, and having plodded on alone all day, I resolved to overtake this same pedestrian, and increased my pace accordingly. He, meanwhile, unconscious of the vicinity of another traveller, kept on at an easy "sling-trot," his head well up, his staff swinging idly in his hand—a practised pedestrian, evidently, and one not easily out-walked through a long day.

I gained upon him, however, at every step, and could have passed him easily; but as I drew near he suddenly came to a halt, disencumbered himself of his wallet, and stretched himself at full length under a tree by the way-side.

I saw now that he was a fine, florid,

handsome fellow of about twenty-eight or thirty years of age—a thorough German to look at; frank, smiling, blue-eyed; dressed in a light holland blouse and loose grey trousers, and wearing on his head a little crimson cap with a gold tassel, such as the students wear at Heidelberg university. He lifted it, with the customary "*Guten Abend*" as I came up, and when I stopped to speak, sprang to his feet with ready politeness, and remained standing.

"Niedersdorf, mein Herr?" said he, in answer to my inquiry. "About four miles farther on. You have but to keep straight forward."

"Many thanks," I said. "You were resting. I am sorry to have disturbed you."

He put up his hand with a deprecating gesture.

"It is nothing," he said. "I have walked far, and the day is warm."

"I have only walked from Heilbronn, and yet I am tired. Pray don't let me keep you standing."

"Will you also sit, mein Herr?" he asked with a pleasant smile. "There is shade for both."

So I sat down, and we fell into conversation. I began by offering him a cigar; but he pulled out his pipe—a great dangling German pipe, with a flexible tube and a painted china bowl like a small coffee-cup.

"A thousand thanks," he said; "but I prefer this old pipe to all the cigars that ever came out of Havannah. It was given to me eight years ago, when I was a student; and my friend who gave it to me is dead."

"You were at Heidelberg?" I said interrogatively.

"Yes; and Fritz (that was my friend) was at Heidelberg also. He was a wonderful fellow; a linguist, a mathematician, a botanist, a geologist. He was was only five-and-twenty when the government appointed him naturalist to an African exploring party; and in Africa he died."

"Such a man," said I, "was a loss to the world."

"Ah, yes," he replied simply; "but a greater loss to me."

To this I could answer nothing; and for some minutes we smoked in silence.

"I was not clever like Fritz," he went on presently. "When I left Heidelberg, I went into business. I am a brewer, and I live at Stuttgard. My name is Gustav Bergheim—what is yours?"

"Hamilton," I replied; "Chandos Hamilton."

He repeated the name after me.

"You are an Englishman?" he said.

I nodded.

"Good. I like the English. There was an Englishman at Heidelberg—such a good fellow! his name was Smith. Do you know him?"

I explained that, in these fortunate islands, there were probably some thirty thousand persons named Smith, of whom, however, I did not know one.

"And are you a milord, and a Member of Parliament?"

I laughed, and shook my head.

"No, indeed," I replied; "neither. I read for the bar; but I do not practise. I am an idle man—of very little use to myself, and of none to my country."

"You are travelling for your amusement?"

"I am. I have just been through the Tyrol and as far as the Italian lakes—on foot, as you see me. But tell me about yourself. That is far more interesting."

"About myself?" he said smiling. "Ah, mein Herr, there is not much to tell. I have told you that I live at Stuttgard. Well, at this time of the year, I allow myself a few weeks' holiday, and I am now on my way to Frankfort, to see my Mädchen, who lives there with her parents."

"Then I may congratulate you on the certainty of a pleasant time."

"Indeed, yes. We love each other

well, my Mädchen and I. Her name is Frederika, and her father is a rich banker and wine merchant. They live in the Neue Mainzer Strasse, near the Taunus Gate; but the Herr Hamilton does not, perhaps, know Frankfort?"

I replied that I knew Frankfort very well, and that the Neue Mainzer Strasse, was, to my thinking, the pleasantest situation in the city. And then I ventured to ask if the Fräulein Frederika was pretty.

"*I* think her so," he said with his boyish smile; "but then, you see, my eyes are in love. You shall judge, however, for yourself."

And with this, he disengaged a locket from his watch-chain, opened it, and showed me the portrait of a golden-haired girl, who, without being actually handsome, had a face as pleasant to look upon as his own.

"Well?" he said anxiously. "What do you say?"

"I say that she has a charming expression," I replied.

"But you do not think her pretty?"

"Nay, she is better than pretty. She has the beauty of real goodness."

His face glowed with pleasure.

"It is true," he said, kissing the portrait, and replacing it upon his chain. "She is an angel! We are to be married in the Spring."

Just at this moment, a sturdy peasant came trudging up from the direction of Niedersdorf, under the shade of a huge red cotton umbrella. He had taken his coat off, probably for coolness, or it might be for economy, and was carrying it, neatly folded up, in a large, new wooden bucket. He saluted us with the usual "Guten Abend" as he approached.

To which Bergheim laughingly replied by asking if the bucket was a love-token from his sweetheart.

"Nein, nein," he answered stolidly;

"I bought it at the Kermess* up yonder."

"So! there is a Kermess at Niedersdorf?"

"Ach, Himmel!—a famous Kermess. All the world is there to-day."

And with a nod, he passed on his way.

My new friend indulged in a long and dismal whistle.

"Der Teufel!" he said, "this is awkward. I'll be bound, now, there won't be a vacant room at any inn in the town. And I had intended to sleep at Niedersdorf to-night. Had you?"

"Well, I should have been guided by circumstances. I should perhaps have put up at Niedersdorf, if I had found myself tired and the place comfortable; or I might have dined there, and after dinner taken some kind of light vehicle as far as Rotheskirche."

"Rotheskirche!" he repeated. "Where is that?"

"It is a village on the Neckar. My

* Kermess—A fair.

guide-book mentions it as a good starting-point for pedestrians, and I am going to walk from there to Heidelberg."

"But have you not been coming out of your way?"

"No; I have only taken a short cut inland, and avoided the dull part of the river. You know the Neckar, of course?"

"Only as far as Neckargemünd; but I have heard that higher up it is almost as fine as the Rhine."

"Hadn't you better join me?" I said, as we adjusted our knapsacks and prepared to resume our journey.

He shook his head, smiling.

"Nay," he replied, "my route leads me by Buchen and Darmstadt. I have no business to go round by Heidelberg."

"It would be worth the *détour*.

"Ah, yes; but it would throw me two days later."

"Not if you made up for lost time by taking the train from Heidelberg."

He hesitated.

"I should like it," he said.

"Then why not do it?"

"Well—yes—I will do it. I will go with you. There! let us shake hands on it, and be friends."

So we shook hands, and it was settled.

The shadows were now beginning to lengthen; but the sun still blazed in the heavens with unabated intensity. Bergheim, however, strode on as lightly, and chatted as gaily, as if his day's work was only just beginning. Never was there so simple, so open-hearted a fellow. He wore his heart literally upon his sleeve, and, as we went along, told me all his little history; how, for instance, his elder sister, having been betrothed to his friend Fritz, had kept single ever since for his sake; how he was himself an only son, and the idol of his mother, now a widow; how he had resolved never to leave either her or his maiden sister; but intended when he married to take a larger house, and bring his wife into their common

home; how Frederika's father had at first opposed their engagement for that reason; how Frederika (being, as he had already said, an angel) had won the father's consent last New Year's Day; and how happy he was now; and how happy they should be in the good time coming; together with much more to the same effect.

To all this I listened, and smiled, and assented, putting in a word here and there, as occasion offered, and encouraging him to talk on to his heart's content.

And now with every mile that brought us nearer to Niedersdorf, the signs of fair-time increased and multiplied. First came straggling groups of homeward-bound peasants—old men and women tottering under the burden of newly-purchased household goods; little children laden with gingerbread and toys; young men and women in their holiday-best—the latter with garlands of oak-leaves bound about their hats. Then came an open cart full of laughing

girls; then more pedestrians; then an old man driving a particularly unwilling pig; then a roystering party of foot-soldiers; and so on, till not only the road, but the fields on either side and every path in sight, swarmed with a double stream of wayfarers —the one coming from the fair—the other setting towards it.

Presently, through the clouds of dust and tobacco-smoke that fouled the air, a steeple and cottages became visible; and then, quite suddenly, we found ourselves in the midst of the fair.

Here a compact, noisy, smoking, staring, laughing, steaming crowd circulated among the booths; some pushing one way, some another—some intent on buying—some on eating and drinking—some on love-making and dancing. In one place we came upon rows of little open stalls for the sale of every commodity under heaven. In another, we peeped into a great restaurant-booth full of country folks demolishing pyramids of German sausage and seas of Bairische

beer. Yonder, on a raised stage in front of a temporary theatre, strutted a party of strolling players in their gaudy tinsels and ballet-dresses. The noise, the smells, the elbowing, the braying of brass bands, the insufferable heat and clamour, made us glad to push our way through as fast as possible, and take refuge in the village inn. But even here we could scarcely get a moment's attention. There were parties dining and drinking in every room in the house—even in the bed-rooms; while the passages, the bar, and the little gardens, front and back, were all full of soldiers, free-shooters, and farmers.

Having with difficulty succeeded in capturing a couple of platters of bread and meat and a measure of beer, we went round to the stable-yard, which was crowded with charrettes, ein-spänner, and country carts of all kinds. The drivers of some of these were asleep in their vehicles; others were gambling for kreutzers on the ground; none were

willing to put their horses to for the purpose of driving us to Rotheskirche-on-the-Neckar.

"Ach, Herr Gott!" said one, "I brought my folks from Frühlingsfeld—near upon ten stunden—and shall have to take them back by and by. That's as much as my beasts can do in one day, and they shouldn't do more for the king!"

"I've just refused five florins to go less than half that distance," said another.

At length one fellow, being somewhat less impracticable than the rest, consented to drive us as far as a certain point where four roads met, on condition that we shared his vehicle with two other travellers, and that the two other travellers consented to let us do so.

"And even so," he added, "I shall have to take them two miles out of their way—but, perhaps, being fair-time, they won't mind that."

As it happened, they were not in a condition to mind that or anything very much,

being a couple of freeshooters from the Black Forest, wild with fun and frolic, and somewhat the worse for many potations of Lager-bier. One of them, it seemed, had won a prize at some shooting-match that same morning, and they had been celebrating this triumph all day. Having kept us waiting, with the horses in, for at least three-quarters of an hour, they came, escorted by a troop of their comrades, all laughing, talking, and wound up to the highest pitch of excitement. Then followed a scene of last health-drinkings, last hand-shakings, last embracements. Finally, we drove off just as it was getting dusk, followed by many huzzahs, and much waving of grey and green caps.

For the first quarter of an hour they were both very noisy, exchanging boisterous greetings with every passer-by, singing snatches of songs, and laughing incessantly. Then, as the dusk deepened and we left the last stragglers behind, they sank into

a tipsy stupor, and ended by falling fast asleep.

Meanwhile, the driver lit his pipe and let his tired horses choose their own pace; the stars came out one by one overhead; and the road, leaving the dead level of the plain, wound upwards through a district that became more hilly with every mile.

Then I also fell asleep—I cannot tell for how long—to be waked by-and-by by the stopping of the charrette, and the voice of the driver, saying:—

"This is the nearest point to which I can take these Herren. Will they be pleased to alight?"

I sat up and rubbed my eyes. It was bright starlight. Bergheim was already leaning out, and opening the door. Our fellow-travellers were still sound asleep. We were in the midst of a wild, hilly country, black with bristling pine-woods; and had drawn up at an elevated point where four roads meet.

"Which of these are we take?" asked Bergheim, as he pulled out his purse and counted the stipulated number of florins into the palm of the driver.

The man pointed with his whip in a direction at right angles to the road by which he was himself driving.

"And how far shall we have to walk?"

"To Rotheskirche?"

"Yes—to Rotheskirche."

He grunted doubtfully. "Ugh!" he said, "I can't be certain to a mile or so. It may be twelve or fourteen."

"A good road?"

"Yes—a good road; but hilly. These Herren have only to keep straight forward. They cannot miss the way."

And so he drives off, and leaves us standing in the road. The moon is now rising behind a slope of dark trees—the air is chill—an owl close by utters its tremulous, melancholy cry. Place and hour considered, the prospect of twelve or fourteen miles of a strange road, in a strange

country, is anything but exhilarating. We push on, however, briskly; and Bergheim, whose good spirits are invincible, whistles and chatters, and laughs away as gaily as if we were just starting on a brilliant May morning.

"I wonder if you were ever tired in your life!" I exclaim by and by, half peevishly.

"Tired!" he echoes. "Why, I am as tired at this moment as a dog; and would gladly lie down by the roadside, curl myself up under a tree, and sleep till morning. I wonder, by the way, what o'clock it is."

I pulled out my fusee-box, struck a light, and looked at my watch. It was only ten o'clock.

"We have been walking," said Bergheim, "about half an hour, and I don't believe we have done two miles in the time. Well, it can't go on uphill like this all the way!"

"Impossible," I replied. "Rothes-

kirche is on the level of the river. We must sooner or later begin descending towards the valley of the Neckar."

"I wish it might be sooner, then," laughed my companion, "for I had done a good twenty miles to-day before you overtook me."

"Well, perhaps we may come upon some place half way. If so, I vote that we put up for the night, and leave Rotheskirche till the morning."

"Ay, that would be capital!" said he. "If it wasn't that I am as hungry as a wolf, I wouldn't say no to the hut of a charcoal-burner to-night."

And now, plodding on more and more silently as our fatigue increased, we found the pine-forests gradually drawing nearer, till by and by they enclosed us on every side, and our road lay through the midst of them. Here in the wood, all was dark —all was silent—not a breath stirred. The moon was rising fast; but the shadows of the pines lay long and dense upon

the road, with only a sharp silvery patch breaking through here and there. By and by we came upon a broad space of clearing, dotted over with stacks of brushwood and great symmetrical piles of barked trunks. Then followed another tract of close forest. Then our road suddenly emerged into the full moonlight, and sometimes descending abruptly, sometimes keeping at a dead level for half a mile together, continued to skirt the forest on the left.

"I see a group of buildings down yonder," said Bergheim, pointing to a spot deep in the shadow of the hillside.

I could see nothing resembling buildings, but he stuck to his opinion.

"That they are buildings," he said, "I am positive. More I cannot tell by this uncertain light. It may be a mere cluster of cottages, or it may be a farmhouse, with stacks and sheds close by. I think it is the latter."

Animated by this hope, we now pushed on more rapidly. For some minutes our road carried us out of sight of the spot; but when we next saw it, a long, low, white-fronted house and some other smaller buildings were distinctly visible.

"A mountain farmstead, by all the gods of Olympus!" exclaimed Bergheim, joyously. "This is good fortune! And they are not gone to bed yet, either."

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"Because I saw a light."

"But suppose they do not wish to take us in?" I suggested.

"Suppose an impossibility! Who ever heard of inhospitality among our Black Forest folk?"

"Black Forest!" I repeated. "Do you call this the Black Forest?"

"Undoubtedly. All these wooded hills south of Heidelberg and the Odenwald are outlying spurs and patches of the old legendary Schwartzwald—now dwindling

year by year. Hark! the dogs have found us out already!"

As he spoke, a dog barked loudly in the direction of the farm; and then another, and another. Bergheim answered them with a shout. Suddenly a bright light flashed across the darkness—flitted vaguely for a moment to and fro, and then came steadily towards us; resolving itself presently into a lanthorn carried by a man.

We hurried eagerly to meet him—a tall, square built, heavy-browed peasant, about forty years of age.

"Who goes there?" he said, holding the lanthorn high above his head, and shading his eyes with his hand.

"Travellers," replied my companion. "Travellers wanting food and shelter for the night."

The man looked at us for a moment in silence.

"You travel late," he said, at length.

"Ay—and we must have gone on

still later, if we had not come upon your house. We were bound for Rotheskirche. Can you take us in."

"Yes," he said sullenly. "I suppose so. This way."

And, swinging the lanthorn as he went, he turned on his heel abruptly, and led the way back to the house.

"A boorish fellow enough!" said I, as we followed.

"Nay—a mere peasant!" replied Bergheim. "A mere peasant—rough, but kindly."

As we drew near the house, two large mastiff pups came rushing out from a yard somewhere at the back, and a huge, tawny dog chained up in an open shed close by, strained at his collar and yelled savagely.

"Down, Caspar! Down, Schwartz!" growled our conductor, with an oath.

And immediately the pups slunk back into the yard, and the dog in the shed

dropped into a low snarl, eyeing us fiercely as we passed.

The house-door opened straight upon a large, low, raftered kitchen, with a cavernous fire-place at the further end, flanked on each side by a high-backed settle. The settles, the long table in the middle of the room, the stools and chairs ranged round the walls, the heavy beams overhead, from which hung strings of dried herbs, ropes of onions, hams, and the like, were all of old, dark oak. The ceiling was black with the smoke of at least a century. An oak dresser laden with rough blue and grey ware and rows of metal-lidded drinking mugs; an old blunderbuss and a horn-handled riding-whip over the chimney-piece; a couple of hatchets, a spade, and a fishing-rod behind the door; and a Swiss clock in the corner, completed the furniture of the room. A couple of half-charred logs smouldered on the hearth. An oil-lamp flared upon the middle of the table, at one corner of

which sat two men with a stone jug and a couple of beer-mugs between them, playing at cards, and a third man looking on. The third man rose as we entered, and came forward. He was so like the one who had come out to meet us, that I saw at once they must be brothers.

"Two travellers," said our conductor, setting down his lanthorn, and shutting the door behind us.

The players laid down their greasy cards to stare at us. The second brother, a trifle more civil than the first, asked if we wished for anything before going to bed.

Bergheim unslung his wallet, flung himself wearily into a corner of the settle, and said:—

"Heavens and earth! yes. We are almost starving. We have been on the road all day, and have had no regular dinner. Is this a farmhouse or an inn?"

"Both."

"What have you in the house?"

"Ham—eggs—voorst—cheese—wine—beer—coffee."

"Then bring us the best you have, and plenty of it, and as fast as you can. We'll begin on the voorst and a bottle of your best wine, while the ham and eggs are frying; and we'll have the coffee to finish."

The man nodded; went to a door at the other end of the room—repeated the order to some one out of sight; and came back again, his hands in his pockets. The first brother, meanwhile, was lounging against the table, looking on at the players.

"It's a long game," he said.

"Ay—but it's just ended," replied one of the men, putting down his card with an air of triumph.

His adversary pondered, threw down his hand, and, with a round oath, owned himself beaten.

Then they divided the remaining contents of the stone jug, drained their mugs, and rose to go. The loser pulled out a handful of small coin, and paid the reckoning for both.

"We've sat late," said he, with a glance at the clock. "Good night, Karl—good night, Friedrich."

The first brother, whom I judged to be Karl, nodded sulkily. The second muttered a gruff sort of good night. The countrymen lit their pipes, took another long stare at Bergheim and myself, touched their hats, and went away.

The first brother, Karl, who was evidently the master, went out with them, shutting the door with a tremendous bang. The younger, Friedrich, cleared the board, opened a cupboard under the dresser, brought out a loaf of black bread, a lump of voorst, and part of a goat's milk cheese, and then went to fetch the wine. Meanwhile we each drew a chair to the table, and fell to vigorously. When Friedrich returned with the wine, a pleasant smell of broiling ham came in with him through the door.

"You are hungry," he said, looking down at us from under his black brows.

"Ay, and thirsty," replied Gustav, reaching out his hand for the bottle. "Is your wine good?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Drink and judge for yourself," he answered. "It's the best we have."

"Then drink with us," said my companion, good-humouredly, filling a glass and pushing it towards him across the the table.

But he shook his head with an ungracious "Nein, nein," and again left the room. The next moment we heard his heavy footfall going to and fro overhead.

"He is preparing our beds," I said. "Are there no women, I wonder, about the place?"

"Well, yes—this looks like one," laughed Bergheim, as the door leading to the inner kitchen again opened, and a big stolid-looking peasant girl came in with a smoking dish of ham and eggs, which she set down before us on the table. "Stop! stop!" he exclaimed, as she turned away.

"Don't be in such a hurry, my girl. What is your name?"

She stopped with a bewildered look, but said nothing. Bergheim repeated the question.

"My—my name?" she stammered. "Annchen."

"Good. Then, Annchen" (filling a bumper and draining it at a draught), "I drink to thy health. Wilt thou drink to mine?" And he pointed to the glass poured out for the landlord's brother.

But she only looked at him in the same scared, stupid way, and kept edging away towards the door.

"Let her go," I said. "She is evidently half an idiot."

"She's no idiot to refuse that wine," replied Bergheim, as the door closed after her. "It's the most abominable mixture I ever put inside my lips. Have you tasted it?"

I had not tasted it as yet, and now I would not; so, the elder brother coming

back just at that moment, we called for beer.

"Don't you like the wine?" he said, scowling.

"No," replied Bergheim. "Do you? If so, you're welcome to the rest of it."

The landlord took up the bottle and held it between his eyes and the lamp.

"Bad as it is," he said, "you've drunk half of it."

"Not I—only one glass, thanks be to Bacchus! There stands the other. Let us have a Schoppen of your best beer—and I hope it will be better than your best wine."

The landlord looked from Bergheim to the glass—from the glass to the bottle. He seemed to be measuring with his eye how much had really been drunk. Then he went to the inner door; called to Friedrich to bring a Schoppen of the Bairisch, and went away, shutting the door after him. From the sound of his footsteps, it seemed to us as if he also was gone upstairs, but

into some more distant part of the house. Presently the younger brother re-appeared with the beer, placed it before us in silence, and went away as before.

"The most forbidding, disagreeable, uncivil pair I ever saw in my life!" said I.

"They're not fascinating, I admit," said Bergheim, leaning back in his chair with the air of a man whose appetite is somewhat appeased. "I don't know which is the worst—their wine or their manners."

And then he yawned tremendously, and pushed out his plate, which I heaped afresh with ham and eggs. When he had swallowed a few mouthfuls, he leaned his head upon his hand, and declared he was too tired to eat more.

"And yet," he added, "I am still hungry."

"Nonsense!" I said; "eat enough now you are about it. How is the beer?"

He took a pull at the Schoppen.

"Capital," he said. "Now I can go on again."

The next instant he was nodding over his plate.

"I am ashamed to be so stupid," he said, rousing himself presently; "but I am overpowered with fatigue. Let us have the coffee; it will wake me up a bit."

But he had no sooner said this than his chin dropped on his breast, and he was sound asleep.

I did not call for the coffee immediately. I let him sleep, and went on quietly with my supper. Just as I had done, however, the brothers came back together, Friedrich bringing the coffee—two large cups on a tray. The elder, standing by the table, looked down at Bergheim with his unfriendly frown.

"Your friend is tired," he said.

"Yes, he has walked far to-day—much farther than I have."

"Humph! you will be glad to go to bed."

"Indeed we shall. Are our rooms ready?"

"Yes."

I took one of the cups, and put the other beside Bergheim's plate.

"Here, Bergheim," I said, "wake up; the coffee is waiting."

But he slept on, and never heard me.

I then lifted my own cup to my lips—paused—set it down untasted. It had an odd, pungent smell that I did not like.

"What is the matter with it?" I said, "it does not smell like pure coffee."

The brothers exchanged a rapid glance.

"It is the Kirschenwasser," said Karl. "We always put it in our black coffee.

I tasted it, but the flavour of the coffee was quite drowned in that of the coarse, fiery spirit.

"Do you not like it?" asked the younger brother.

"It is very strong," I said.

"But it is very good," replied he; "real Black Forest Kirsch—the best thing in the world, if one is tired after a journey. Drink it off, mein Herr; it is of no use to sip it. It will make you sleep."

This was the longest speech either of them had yet made.

"Thanks," I said, pulling out my cigar-case, "but this stuff is too powerful to be drunk at a draught. I shall make it last out a cigar or two."

"And your friend?"

"He is better without the Kirsch, and may sleep till I am ready to go to bed."

Again they looked at each other.

"You need not sit up," I said impatiently; for it annoyed me, somehow, to have them standing there, one at each side of the table, alternately looking at me and at each other. "I will call the Mädchen to show us to our rooms when we are ready."

"Good," said the elder brother, after a moment's hesitation. "Come, Friedrich."

Friedrich turned at once to follow him, and they both left the room.

I listened. I heard them for awhile moving to and fro in the inner kitchen; then the sound of their double foot-

steps going up the stairs; then the murmur of their voices somewhere above, yet not exactly overhead; then silence.

I felt more comfortable, now that they were fairly gone, and not likely to return. I breathed more freely. I had disliked the brothers from the first. I had felt uneasy from the moment I crossed their threshold. Nothing, I told myself, should induce me at any time, or under any circumstances, to put up under their roof again.

Pondering thus, I smoked on, and took another sip of the coffee. It was not so hot now, and some of the strength of the spirit had gone off; but under the flavour of the Kirschenwasser I could (or fancied I could) detect another flavour, pungent and bitter—a flavour, in short, just corresponding to the smell that I had at first noticed.

This startled me. I scarcely knew why, but it did startle me, and somewhat unpleasantly. At the same instant I observed that Bergheim, in the heaviness and helplessness of sleep, had swayed over on one

side, and was hanging very uncomfortably across one arm of his chair.

"Come, come," I said, "wake up, Herr fellow-traveller. This sort of dozing will do you no good. Wake up, and come to bed."

And with this I took him by the arm, and tried to rouse him. Then for the first time I observed that his face was deadly white—that his teeth were fast clenched —that his breathing was unnatural and laboured.

I sprang to my feet. I dragged him into an upright posture; I tore open his neckcloth; I was on the point of rushing to the door to call for help, when a suspicion—one of those terrible suspicions which are suspicion and conviction in one —flashed suddenly upon me.

The rejected glass of wine was still standing on the table. I smelt it—tasted it. My dread was confirmed. It had the same pungent odour, the same bitter flavour as the coffee.

In a moment I measured all the horror of my position; alone—unarmed—my unconscious fellow-traveller drugged and helpless on my hands—the murderers overhead, biding their time—the silence and darkness of night—the unfrequented road—the solitary house—the improbability of help from without—the imminence of the danger from within. . . . I saw it all! What could I do? Was there any way, any chance, any hope?

I turned cold and dizzy. I leaned against the table for support. Was I also drugged, and was my turn coming? I looked round for water, but there was none upon the table. I did not dare to touch the beer, lest it also should be doctored.

At that instant I heard a faint sound outside, like the creaking of a stair. My presence of mind had not as yet for a moment deserted me, and now my strength came back at the approach of danger. I cast a rapid glance round the room. There

was the blunderbuss over the chimney-piece—there were the two hatchets in the corner. I moved a chair loudly, and hummed some snatches of songs.

They should know that I was awake—this might at least keep them off a little longer. The scraps of songs covered the sound of my footsteps as I stole across the room and secured the hatchets. One of these I laid before me on the table; the other I hid among the wood in the wood-basket beside the hearth—singing, as it were to myself, all the time.

Then I listened breathlessly.

All was silent.

Then I clinked my tea-spoon in my cup—feigned a long yawn—under cover of the yawn took down the blunderbuss from its hook—and listened again.

Still all was silent—silent as death—save only the loud ticking of the clock in the corner, and the heavy beating of my heart.

Then, after a few seconds that dragged

past like hours, I distinctly heard a muffled tread stealing softly across the floor overhead, and another very faint retreating creak or two upon the stairs.

To examine the blunderbuss, find it loaded with a heavy charge of slugs, test the dryness of the powder, cock it, and place it ready for use beside the hatchet on the table, was but the work of a moment.

And now my course was taken. My spirits rose with the possession of a certain means of defence, and I prepared to sell my own life, and the life of the poor fellow beside me, as dearly as might be.

I must turn the kitchen into a fortress, and defend my fortress as long as defence was possible. If I could hold it till daylight came to my aid, bringing with it the chances of traffic, of passers-by, of farm-labourers coming to their daily work —then I felt we should be comparatively safe. If, however, I could not keep the enemy out so long, then I had another

resource . . . . . But of this there was no time to think at present. First of all, I must barricade my fortress.

The windows were already shuttered-up and barred on the inside. The key of the house-door was in the lock, and only needed turning. The heavy iron bolt, in like manner, had only to be shot into its place. To do this, however, would make too much noise just now. First and most important was the door communicating with the inner kitchen and the stairs. This, above all, I must secure; and this, as I found to my dismay, had no bolts or locks whatever on the inside—nothing but a clumsy wooden latch!

To pile against it every moveable in the room was my obvious course; but then it was one that, by the mere noise it must make, would at once alarm the enemy. No! I must secure that door—but secure it silently—at all events for the next few minutes.

Inspired by dread necessity, I became

fertile in expedients. With a couple of iron forks snatched from the table, I pinned the latch down, forcing the prongs by sheer strength of hand deep into the woodwork of the door. This done, I tore down one of the old rusty bits from its nail above the mantel-shelf, and, linking it firmly over the thump-piece of the latch on one side, and over the clumsy catch on the other, I improvised a door-chain that would at least act as a momentary check in case the door was forced from without. Lastly, by means of some half-charred splinters from the hearth, I contrived to wedge up the bottom of the door in such a manner that, the more it was pushed inwards, the more firmly fixed it must become.

So far my work had been noiseless; but now the time was come when it could be so no longer. The house-door must be secured at all costs; and I knew beforehand that I could not move those heavy fastenings unheard. Nor did I.

The key, despite all my efforts, grated loudly in the lock, and the bolt resisted the rusty staples. I got it in, however, and the next moment heard rapid footsteps overhead.

I knew now that the crisis was coming, and from this moment prepared for open resistance.

Regardless of noise, I dragged out first one heavy oaken settle, and then the other —placed them against the inner door— piled them with chairs, stools, firewood, every heavy thing I could lay hands upon—raked the slumbering embers, and threw more wood upon the hearth, so as to bar that avenue, if any attempt was made by way of the chimney—and hastily ransacked every drawer in the dresser, in the hope of finding something in the shape of ammunition.

Meanwhile, the brothers had taken alarm, and having tried the inner door, had now gone round to the front, where

I heard them try first the house-door and then the windows.

"Open! open, I say!" shouted the elder—(I knew him by his voice). "What is the matter within?"

"The matter is that I choose to spend the night in this room," I shouted in reply.

"It is a public room—you have no right to shut the doors!" he said, with a thundering blow upon the lock.

"Right or no right," I answered, "I shoot dead the first man who forces his way in!"

There was a momentary silence, and I heard them muttering together outside.

I had by this time found, at the back of one of the drawers, a handful of small shot screwed up in a bit of newspaper, and a battered old powder-flask containing about three charges of powder. Little as it was, it helped to give me confidence.

Then the parleying began afresh.

"Once more, accursed Englishman, will you open the door?"

"No."

A torrent of savage oaths—then a pause.

"Force us to break it open, and it will be the worse for you!"

"Try."

All this time I had been wrenching out the hooks from the dresser, and the nails, wherever I could find any, from the walls. Already I had enough to reload the blunderbuss three times, with my three charges of powder. If only Bergheim were himself now! . . . .

I still heard the murmuring of the brothers' voices outside—then the sound of their retreating footsteps—then an outburst of barking and yelping at the back, which showed they had let loose the dogs. Then all was silent.

Where were they gone? How would they begin the attack? In what way

would it all end? I glanced at my watch. It was just twenty minutes past one. In two hours and a half, or three hours, it would be dawn. Three hours! Great Heavens! what an eternity!

I looked round to see if there was anything I could still do for defence; but it seemed to me that I had already done what little it was possible to do with the material at hand. I could only wait.

All at once I heard their footsteps in the house again. They were going rapidly to and fro overhead; then up and down the stairs; then overhead again; and presently I heard a couple of bolts shot, and apparently a heavy wooden bar put up, on the other side of the inner kitchen-door which I had just been at so much pains to barricade. This done, they seemed to go away. A distant door banged heavily; and again there was silence.

Five minutes, ten minutes, went by. Bergheim still slept heavily; but his

breathing, I fancied, was less stertorous, and his countenance less rigid, than when I first discovered his condition. I had no water with which to bathe his head; but I rubbed his forehead and the palms of his hands with beer, and did what I could to keep his body upright.

Then I heard the enemy coming back to the front, slowly, and with heavy footfalls. They paused for a moment at the front door, seemed to set something down, and then retreated quickly. After an interval of about three minutes, they returned in the same way; stopped at the same place; and hurried off as before. This they did several times in succession. Listening with suspended breath and my ear against the keyhole, I distinctly heard them deposit some kind of burden each time—evidently a weighty burden, from the way in which they carried it; and yet, strange to say, one that, despite its weight, made scarcely any noise in the setting down.

Just at this moment, when all my senses were concentrated in the one act of listening, Bergheim stirred for the first time, and began muttering.

"The man!" he said, in a low, suppressed tone. "The man under the hearth!"

I flew to him at the first sound of his voice. He was recovering. Heaven be thanked, he was recovering! In a few minutes we should be two—two against two—right and might on our side—both ready for the defence of our lives!

"One man under the hearth," he went on, in the same unnatural tone. "Four men at the bottom of the pond—all murdered—foully murdered!"

I had scarcely heeded his first words; but now, as their sense broke upon me, that great rush of exultation and thankfulness was suddenly arrested. My heart stood still; I trembled; I turned cold with horror.

Then the veins swelled on his forehead;

his face became purple; and he struck out blindly, as one oppressed with some horrible nightmare.

"Blood!" he gasped. "Everywhere blood—don't touch it. God's vengeance —help!" . . .

And so, struggling violently in my arms, he opened his eyes, stared wildly round, and made an effort to get upon his feet.

"What is the matter?" he said, sinking back again, and trembling from head to foot. "Was I asleep?"

I rubbed his hands and forehead again with beer. I tasted it, and finding no ill flavour upon it, put a tiny drop to his lips.

"You are all right now," I said. "You were very tired, and you fell asleep after supper. Don't you remember?"

He put his hand to his head. "Ah, yes," he said, "I remember. I have been dreaming" . . .

He looked round the room in a be-

wildered way; then, struck all at once by the strange disorder of the furniture, asked what was the matter.

I told him in the least alarming way, and with the fewest words I could muster, but before I could get to the end of my explanation he was up, ready for resistance, and apparently himself again.

"Where are they?" he said. "What are they doing now? Outside, do you say? Why, good heavens! man, they're blocking us in. Listen!—don't you hear? —it is the rustling of straw. Bring the blunderbuss! quick!—to the window . . . God grant we may not be too late!"

We both rushed to the window; Bergheim to undo the shutter, and I to shoot down the first man in sight.

"Look there!" he said, and pointed to the door.

A thin stream of smoke was oozing under the threshold and stealing upward in a filmy cloud that already dimmed the atmosphere of the room.

"They are going to burn us out!" I exclaimed.

"No, they are going to burn us alive," replied Bergheim, between his clenched teeth. "We know too much, and they are determined to silence us at all costs, though they burn the house down over our heads. Now hold your breath, for I am going to open the window, and the smoke will rush in like a torrent."

He opened it, but very little came in—for this reason, that the outside was densely blocked with straw, which had not yet ignited.

In a moment we had dragged the table under the window—put our weapons aside ready for use—and set to work to cut our way out.

Bergheim, standing on the table, wrenched away the straw in great armfuls. I caught it, and hurled it into the middle of the room. We laboured at the work like giants. In a few moments the pile had mounted to the height of the table.

Then Bergheim cried out that the straw under his hands was taking fire, and that he dared throw it back into the room no longer!

I sprang to his aid with the two hatchets. I gave him one—I fell to work with the other. The smoke and flame rushed in our faces, as we hewed down the burning straw.

Meanwhile, the room behind us was full of smoke, and above the noise of our own frantic labour we heard a mighty crackling and hissing, as of a great conflagration.

"Take the blunderbuss—quick!" cried Bergheim, hoarsely. "There is nothing but smoke outside now, and burning straw below. Follow me! Jump as far out as you can, and shoot the first you see!"

And with this, he leaped out into the smoke, and was gone!

I only waited to grope out the blunderbuss; then, holding it high above my head, I shut my eyes and sprang after

him, clearing the worst of the fire, and falling on my hands and knees among a heap of smouldering straw and ashes beyond. At the same instant that I touched the ground, I heard the sharp crack of a rifle, and saw two figures rush past me.

To dash out in pursuit without casting one backward glance at the burning house behind me—to see a tall figure vanishing among the trees, and two others in full chase—to cover the foremost of these two and bring him down as one would bring down a wolf in the open, was for me but the work of a second.

I saw him fall. I saw the other hesitate, look back, throw up his hands with a wild gesture, and fly towards the hills.

* * * *

The rest of my story is soon told. The one I had shot was Friedrich, the younger brother. He died in about half an hour, and never spoke again. The elder escaped

into the forest, and there succeeded in hiding himself for several weeks among the charcoal-burners. Being hunted down, however, at last, he was tried at Heilbronn, and there executed.

The pair, it seemed, were practised murderers. The pond, when dragged, was found to contain four of their victims; and when the crumbling ruins of the homestead were cleared for the purpose, the mortal remains of a fifth were discovered under the hearth, in that kitchen which had so nearly proved our grave. A store of money, clothes, and two or three watches, was also found secreted in a granary near the house; and these things served to identify three out of the five corpses thus providentially brought to light.

My friend, Gustave Bergheim (now the friend of seventeen years) is well and prosperous; married to his "Mädchen;" and the happy father of a numerous family. He often tells the tale of our

terrible night on the borders of the Black Forest, and avers that in that awful dream in which his senses came back to him, he distinctly saw, as in a vision, the mouldering form beneath the hearth, and the others under the sluggish waters of the pond.

THE STORY OF SALOME.

THE STORY OF SALOME.

A FEW years ago, no matter how many, I, Harcourt Blunt, was travelling with my friend Coventry Turnour, and it was on the steps of our hotel that I received from him the announcement that he was again in love.

"I tell you, Blunt," said my fellow-traveller, "she's the loveliest creature I ever beheld in my life."

I laughed outright.

"My dear fellow," I replied, "you've so often seen the loveliest creature you ever beheld in your life."

"Ay, but I am in earnest now for the first time."

"And you have so often been in earnest for the first time! Remember the innkeeper's daughter at Cologne."

"A pretty housemaid, whom no training could have made presentable."

"Then there was the beautiful American at Interlachen."

"Yes; but—"

"And the bella Marchesa at Prince Torlonia's ball."

"Not one of them worthy to be named in the same breath with my imperial Venetian. Come with me to the Merceria and be convinced. By taking a gondola to St. Mark's Place we shall be there in a quarter of an hour."

I went, and he raved of his new flame all the way. She was a Jewess—he would convert her. Her father kept a shop in the Merceria—what of that? He dealt only in costliest Oriental merchandise, and was as rich as a Rothschild. As for

any probable injury to his own prospects, why need he hesitate on that account? What were "prospects" when weighed against the happiness of one's whole life? Besides, he was not ambitious. He didn't care to go into Parliament. If his uncle, Sir Geoffrey, cut him off with a shilling, what then? He had a moderate independence of which no one living could deprive him, and what more could any reasonable man desire?

I listened, smiled, and was silent. I knew Coventry Turnour too well to attach the smallest degree of importance to anything that he might say or do in a matter of this kind. To be distractedly in love was his normal condition. We had been friends from boyhood; and since the time when he used to cherish a hopeless attachment to the young lady behind the counter of the tart-shop at Harrow, I had never known him "fancy-free" for more than a few weeks at a time. He had gone through every phase of no less than three

grandes passions during the five months that we had now been travelling together; and having left Rome about eleven weeks before with every hope laid waste, and a heart so broken that it could never by any possibility be put together again, he was now, according to the natural course of events, just ready to fall in love again.

We landed at the traghetto San Marco. It was a cloudless morning towards the middle of April, just ten years ago. The Ducal Palace glowed in the hot sunshine; the boatmen were clustered, gossiping, about the quay; the orange-vendors were busy under the arches of the piazzetta; the *flâneurs* were already eating ices and smoking cigarettes outside the cafés. There was an Austrian military band, strapped, buckled, moustachioed, and white-coated, playing just in front of St. Mark's; and the shadow of the great bell-tower slept all across the square.

Passing under the low round archway leading to the Merceria, we plunged at

once into that cool labyrinth of narrow, intricate, and picturesque streets, where the sun never penetrates—where no wheels are heard, and no beast of burden is seen—where every house is a shop, and every shop-front is open to the ground, as in an Oriental bazaar—where the upper balconies seem almost to meet overhead, and are separated by only a strip of burning sky—and where more than three people cannot march abreast in any part. Pushing our way as best we might through the motley crowd that here chatters, cheapens, buys, sells, and perpetually jostles to and fro, we came presently to a shop for the sale of Eastern goods. A few glass jars, filled with spices and some pieces of stuff, untidily strewed the counter next the street; but within, dark and narrow though it seemed, the place was crammed with costliest merchandise. Cases of gorgeous Oriental jewelry; embroideries and fringes of massive gold and silver bullion; precious drugs and spices;

exquisite toys in filigree; miracles of carving in ivory, sandal-wood, and amber; jewelled yataghans; scimitars of state, rich with "barbaric pearl and gold;" bales of Cashmere shawls, China silks, India muslins, gauzes, and the like, filled every inch of available space from floor to ceiling, leaving only a narrow lane from the door to the counter, and a still narrower passage to the rooms beyond the shop.

We went in. A young woman who was sitting reading on a low seat behind the counter, laid aside her book, and rose slowly. She was dressed wholly in black. I cannot describe the fashion of her garments. I only know that they fell about her in long, soft, trailing folds, leaving a narrow band of fine cambric visible at the throat and wrists; and that, however graceful and unusual this dress may have been, I scarcely observed it, so entirely was I taken up with admiration of her beauty.

For she was indeed very beautiful—

beautiful in a way I had not anticipated Coventry Turnour, with all his enthusiasm, had failed to do her justice. He had raved of her eyes—her large, lustrous, melancholy eyes,—of the transparent paleness of her complexion, of the faultless delicacy of her features; but he had not prepared me for the unconscious dignity, the perfect nobleness and refinement, that informed her every look and gesture. My friend requested to see a bracelet at which he had been looking the day before. Proud, stately, silent, she unlocked the case in which it was kept, and laid it before him on the counter. He asked permission to take it over to the light. She bent her head, but answered not a word. It was like being waited upon by a young Empress.

Turnour took the bracelet to the door and affected to examine it. It consisted of a double row of gold coins linked together at intervals by a bean-shaped ornament studded with pink coral and

diamonds. Coming back into the shop he asked me if I thought it would please his sister, to whom he had promised a remembrance of Venice.

"It is a pretty trifle," I replied; "but surely a remembrance of Venice should be of Venetian manufacture. This, I suppose, is Turkish."

The beautiful Jewess looked up. We spoke in English; but she understood, and replied.

"*E Greco, signore,*" she said coldly.

At this moment an old man came suddenly forward from some dark counting-house at the back—a grizzled, bearded, eager-eyed Shylock, with a pen behind his ear.

"Go in, Salome—go in, my daughter," he said hurriedly. "I will serve these gentlemen."

She lifted her eyes to his for one moment—then moved silently away, and vanished in the gloom of the room beyond.

We saw her no more. We lingered awhile looking over the contents of the jewel-cases; but in vain. Then Turnour bought his bracelet, and we went out again into the narrow streets, and back to the open daylight of the Gran' Piazza.

"Well," he said breathlessly, "what do you think of her?"

"She is very lovely."

"Lovelier than you expected?"

"Much lovelier. But—"

"But what?"

"The sooner you succeed in forgetting her the better."

He vowed, of course, that he never would and never could forget her. He would hear of no incompatibilities, listen to no objections, believe in no obstacles. That the beautiful Salome was herself not only unconscious of his passion and indifferent to his person, but ignorant of his very name and station, were facts not even to be admitted on the list of

difficulties. Finding him thus deaf to reason, I said no more.

It was all over, however, before the week was out.

"Look here, Blunt," he said, coming up to me one morning in the coffee-room of our hotel just as I was sitting down to answer a pile of home-letters; "would you like to go on to Trieste to-morrow? There, don't look at me like that—you can guess how it is with me. I was a fool ever to suppose she would care for me—a stranger, a foreigner, a Christian. Well, I'm horribly out of sorts, anyhow—and—and I wish I was a thousand miles off at this moment!"

* * * *

We travelled on together to Athens, and there parted, Turnour being bound for England, and I for the East. My own tour lasted many months longer. I went first to Egypt and the Holy Land; then joined an exploring party on the Euphrates; and at length, after just

twelve months of Oriental life, found myself back again at Trieste about the middle of April in the year following that during which occurred the events I have just narrated. There I found that batch of letters and papers to which I had been looking forward for many weeks past; and amongst the former, one from Coventry Turnour. This time he was not only irrecoverably in love, but on the eve of matrimony. The letter was rapturous and extravagant enough. The writer was the happiest of men; his destined bride the loveliest and most amiable of her sex; the future a paradise; the past a melancholy series of mistakes. As for love, he had never, of course, known what it was till now.

And what of the beautiful Salome?

Not one word of her from beginning to end. He had forgotten her as utterly as if she had never existed. And yet how desperately in love and how desperately in despair he was "one little year ago!"

Ah, yes; but then it *was* "one little year ago;" and who that had ever known Coventry Turnour would expect him to remember *la plus grande des grandes passions* for even half that time?

I slept that night at Trieste and went on next day to Venice. Somehow I could not get Turnour and his love-affairs out of my head. I remembered our visit to the Merceria. I was haunted by the image of the beautiful Jewess. Was she still so lovely? Did she still sit reading in her wonted seat by the open counter, with the gloomy shop reaching away behind, and the cases of rich robes and jewels all around?

An irresistible impulse prompted me to go to the Merceria and see her once again. I went. It had been a busy morning with me, and I did not get there till between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. The place was crowded. I passed up the well-remembered street, looking out on both sides for the gloomy

little shop with its unattractive counter; but in vain. When I had gone so far that I thought I must have passed it, I turned back. House by house I retraced my steps to the very entrance, and still could not find it. Then, concluding I had not gone far enough at first, I turned back again till I reached a spot where several streets diverged. Here I came to a stand-still, for beyond this point I knew I had not passed before.

It was now evident that the Jew no longer occupied his former shop in the Merceria, and that my chance of discovering his whereabouts was exceedingly slender. I could not inquire of his successor, because I could not identify the house. I found it impossible even to remember what trades were carried on by his neighbours on either side. I was ignorant of his very name. Convinced, therefore, of the inutility of making any further effort, I gave up the search, and comforted myself by

reflecting that my own heart was not made of adamant, and that it was, perhaps, better for my peace not to see the beautiful Salome again. I was destined to see her again, however, and that ere many days had passed over my head.

A year of more than ordinarily fatiguing Eastern travel had left me in need of rest, and I had resolved to allow myself a month's sketching in Venice and its neighbourhood before turning my face homeward.

As, therefore, it is manifestly the first object of a sketcher to select his points of view, and as no more luxurious machine than a Venetian gondola was ever invented for the use of man, I proceeded to employ the first days of my stay in endless boatings to and fro; now exploring all manner of canals and canaletti; now rowing out in the direction of Murano; now making for the islands beyond San Pietro Castello, and

in the course of these pilgrimages noting down an infinite number of picturesque sites, and smoking an infinite number of cigarettes.

It was, I think, about the fourth or fifth day of this pleasant work, when my gondolier proposed to take me as far as the Lido. It wanted about two hours to sunset, and the great sand-bank lay not more than three or four miles away; so I gave the word, and in another moment we had changed our route and were gliding farther and father from Venice at each dip of the oar.

Then the long, dull, distant ridge that had all day bounded the shallow horizon rose gradually above the placid level of the Lagune; assumed a more broken outline; resolved itself into hillocks and hollows of tawny sand; showed here and there a patch of parched grass and tangled brake; and looked like the coasts of some inhospitable desert be-

yond which no traveller might penetrate. My boatman made straight for a spot where some stakes at the water's edge gave token of a landing-place; and here, though with some difficulty, for the tide was low, ran the gondola aground. I landed. My first step was among graves.

"*E'l Cimiterio Giudaico, signore,*" said my gondolier, with a touch of his cap.

The Jewish cemetery! The *ghetto* of the dead! I remembered now to have read or heard long since how the Venetian Jews, cut off in death as in life from the neighbourhood of their Christian rulers, had been buried from immemorial time upon this desolate waste. I stooped to examine the head-stone at my feet. It was but a shattered fragment, crusted over with yellow lichens, and eaten away by the salt sea air. I passed on to the next, and the next.

Some were completely matted over with weeds and brambles; some were half-buried in the drifting sand; of some only a corner remained above the surface. Here and there a name, a date, a fragment of emblematic carving or part of a Hebrew inscription, was yet legible; but all were more or less broken and effaced.

Wandering on thus among graves and hillocks, ascending at every step, and passing some three or or four glassy pools overgrown with gaunt-looking reeds, I presently found that I had reached the central and most elevated part of the Lido, and that I commanded an uninterrupted view on every side. On the one hand lay the broad, silent Lagune bounded by Venice and the Euganean hills—on the other, stealing up in long, lazy folds, and breaking noiselessly against the endless shore, the blue Adriatic. An old man gathering shells on the seaward side, a dis-

tant gondola on the Lagune, were the only signs of life for miles around.

Standing on the upper ridge of this narrow barrier, looking upon both waters, and watching the gradual approach of what promised to be a gorgeous sunset, I fell into one of those wandering trains of thought in which the real and unreal succeed each other as capriciously as in a dream.

I remembered how Goethe here conceived his vertebral theory of the skull —how Byron, too lame to walk, kept his horse on the Lido, and here rode daily to and fro—how Shelley loved the wild solitude of the place, wrote of it in *Julian and Maddalo*, and listened perhaps from this very spot, to the mad-house bell on the island of San Giorgio. Then I wondered if Titian used sometimes to come hither from his gloomy house on the other side of Venice, to study the gold and purple of these western skies—if Othello had walked

here with Desdemona—if Shylock was buried yonder, and Leah whom he loved "when he was a bachelor."

And then in the midst of my reverie, I came suddenly upon another Jewish cemetery.

Was it indeed another, or but an outlying portion of the first? It was evidently another, and a more modern one. The ground was better kept. The monuments were newer. Such dates as I had succeeded in deciphering on the broken sepulchres lower down were all of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; but the inscriptions upon these bore reference to quite recent interments.

I went on a few steps farther. I stopped to copy a quaint Italian couplet on one tomb—to gather a wild forget-me-not from the foot of another—to put aside a bramble that trailed across a third—and then I became aware for the first time of a lady sitting beside

a grave not a dozen yards from the spot on which I stood.

I had believed myself so utterly alone, and was so taken by surprise, that for the first moment I could almost have persuaded myself that she also was "of the stuff that dreams are made of." She was dressed from head to foot in deepest mourning; her face turned from me, looking towards the sunset; her cheek resting in the palm of her hand. The grave by which she sat was obviously recent. The scant herbage round about had been lately disturbed, and the marble headstone looked as if it had not yet undergone a week's exposure to wind and weather.

Persuaded that she had not observed me, I lingered for an instant looking at her. Something in the grace and sorrow of her attitude, something in the turn of her head and the flow of her sable draperies, arrested my attention. Was she young? I fancied so.

Did she mourn a husband?—a lover?—a parent? I glanced towards the headstone. It was covered with Hebrew characters; so that, had I even been nearer, it could have told me nothing.

But I felt that I had no right to stand there, a spectator of her sorrow, an intruder on her privacy. I proceeded to move noiselessly away. At that moment she turned and looked at me.

It was Salome.

Salome, pale and worn as from some deep and wasting grief, but more beautiful, if that could be, than ever. Beautiful, with a still more spiritual beauty than of old; with cheeks so wan, and eyes so unutterably bright and solemn, that my very heart seemed to stand still as I looked upon them. For one second I paused, half fancying, half hoping that there was recognition in her glance; then, not daring to look or

linger longer, turned away. When I had gone far enough to do so without discourtesy, I stopped and looked back. She had resumed her former attitude, and was gazing over towards Venice and the setting sun. The stone by which she watched was not more motionless.

The sun went down in glory. The last flush faded from the domes and bell-towers of Venice; the northward peaks changed from rose to purple, from gold to grey; a scarcely perceptible film of mist became all at once visible upon the surface of the Lagune; and overhead, the first star trembled into light. I waited and watched till the shadows had so deepened that I could no longer distinguish one distant object from another. Was that the spot? Was she still there? Was she moving? Was she gone? I could not tell. The more I looked, the more uncertain I became. Then, fearing to miss my way in the fast-gathering twi-

light, I struck down towards the water's edge and made for the point at which I had landed.

I found my gondolier fast asleep, with his head on a cushion and his bit of gondola-carpet thrown over him for a counterpane. I asked if he had seen any other boat put off from the Lido since I left? He rubbed his eyes, started up, and was awake in a moment.

"*Per Bacco, signore,* I have been asleep," he said apologetically; "I have seen nothing."

"Did you observe any other boat moored hereabouts when we landed?"

"None, signore."

"And you have seen nothing of a lady in black?"

He laughed and shook his head.

"*Consolatevi, signore,*" he said, archly; "she will come to-morrow."

Then, seeing me look grave, he touched his cap, and with a gentle "*Scusate, sig-*

nore," took his place at the stern, and there waited. I bade him row to my hotel; and then, leaning dreamily back, folded my arms, closed my eyes, and thought of Salome.

How lovely she was! How infinitely more lovely than even my first remembrance of her! How was it that I had not admired her more that day in the Merceria? Was I blind, or had she become indeed more beautiful? It was a sad and strange place in which to meet her again. By whose grave was she watching? By her father's? Yes, surely by her father's. He was an old man when I saw him, and in the course of nature had not long to live. He was dead: hence my unavailing search in the Merceria. He was dead. His shop was let to another occupant. His stock-in-trade was sold and dispersed.

And Salome—was she left alone? Had she no mother?—no brother?—no lover? Would her eyes have had that look of

speechless woe in them if she had any very near or dear tie left on earth? Then I thought of Coventry Turnour, and his approaching marriage. Had he ever really loved her? I doubted it. "True love," saith an old song, "can ne'er forget;" but he had forgotten, as though the past had been a dream. And yet he was in earnest while it lasted,—would have risked all for her sake, if she would have listened to him. Ah, if she *had* listened to him!

And then I remembered that he had never told me the particulars of that affair. Did she herself reject him, or did he lay his suit before her father? And was he rejected only because he was a Christian? I had never cared to ask these things while we were together; but now I would have given the best hunter in my stables to know every minute detail connected with the matter.

Pondering thus, travelling over the

same ground again and again, wondering whether she remembered me, whether she was poor, whether she was, indeed, alone in the world, how long the old man had been dead, and a hundred other things of the same kind,—I scarcely noticed how the watery miles glided past, or how the night closed in. One question, however, recurred oftener than any other: How was I to see her again?

I arrived at my hotel; I dined at the *table d'hôte;* I strolled out after dinner to my favourite café in the piazza; I dropped in for half an hour at the Fenice, and heard one act of an extremely poor opera; I came home restless, uneasy, wakeful; and sitting for hours before my bedroom fire, asked myself the same perpetual question—How was I to see her again?

Fairly tired out at last, I fell asleep in my chair, and when I awoke the sun was shining upon my window.

I started to my feet. I had it now. It flashed upon me, as if it came with the sunlight. I had but to go again to the cemetery, copy the inscription upon the old man's tomb, ask my learned friend, Professor Nicolai of Padua, to translate it for me, and then, once in possession of names and dates, the rest would be easy.

In less than an hour, I was once more on my way to the Lido.

I took a rubbing of the stone. It was the quickest way, and the surest; for I knew that in Hebrew everything depended on the pointing of the characters, and I feared to trust my own untutored skill.

This done, I hastened back, wrote my letter to the professor, and despatched both letter and rubbing by the midday train.

The professor was not a prompt man. On the contrary, he was a pre-eminently slow man; dreamy, indolent, buried in

Oriental lore. From any other correspondent one might have looked for a reply in the course of the morrow; but from Nicolai of Padua it would have been folly to expect one under two or three days. And in the meanwhile? Well, in the meanwhile there were churches and palaces to be seen, sketches to be made, letters of introduction to be delivered. It was, at all events, of no use to be impatient.

And yet I was impatient—so impatient that I could neither sketch, nor read, nor sit still for ten minutes together. Possessed by an uncontrollable restlessness, I wandered from gallery to gallery, from palace to palace, from church to church. The imprisonment of even a gondola was irksome to me. I was, as it were, impelled to be moving and doing; and even so, the day seemed endless.

The next was even worse. There was just the possibility of a reply from Padua,

and the knowledge of that possibility unsettled me for the day. Having watched and waited for every post from eight to four, I went down to the traghetto of St. Mark's, and was there hailed by my accustomed gondolier.

He touched his cap and waited for orders.

"Where to, signore?" he asked, finding that I remained silent.

"To the Lido."

It was an irresistible temptation, and I yielded to it; but I yielded in opposition to my judgment. I knew that I ought not to haunt the place. I had resolved that I would not. And yet I went.

Going along, I told myself that I had only come to reconnoitre. It was not unlikely that she might be going to the same spot about the same hour as before; and in that case I might overtake her gondola by the way, or find it moored somewhere along the shore. At all

events, I was determined not to land. But we met no gondola beyond San Pietro Castello; saw no sign of one along the shore. The afternoon was far advanced; the sun was near going down; we had the Lagune and the Lido to ourselves.

My boatman made for the same landing-place, and moored his gondola to the same stake as before. He took it for granted that I meant to land; and I landed. After all, however, it was evident that Salome could not be there, in which case I was guilty of no intrusion. I might stroll in the direction of the cemetery, taking care to avoid her, if she were anywhere about, and keeping well away from that part where I had last seen her. So I broke another resolve, and went up towards the top of the Lido. Again I came to the salt pools and the reeds; again stood with the sea upon my left hand and the Lagune upon my right, and the endless sandbank

reaching on for miles between the two. Yonder lay the new cemetery. Standing thus I overlooked every foot of the ground. I could even distinguish the headstone of which I had taken a rubbing the morning before. There was no living thing in sight. I was, to all appearance, as utterly alone as Enoch Arden on his desert island.

Then I strolled on a little nearer and a little nearer still; and then, contrary to all my determinations, I found myself standing upon the very spot, beside the very grave, which I had made up my mind on no account to approach.

The sun was now just going down—had gone down, indeed, behind a bank of golden-edged cumuli—and was flooding earth, sea, and sky with crimson. It was at this hour that I saw her. It was upon this spot that she was sitting. A few scant blades of grass had sprung up here and there upon the grave. Her dress must have touched them as she sat

there—her dress—perhaps her hand. I gathered one, and laid it carefully between the leaves of my note-book.

At last I turned to go, and, turning, met her face to face!

She was distant about six yards, and advancing slowly towards the spot on which I was standing. Her head drooped slightly forward; her hands were clasped together; her eyes were fixed upon the ground. It was the attitude of a nun. Startled, confused, scarcely knowing what I did, I took off my hat, and drew aside to let her pass.

She looked up—hesitated—stood still—gazed at me with a strange, steadfast, mournful expression—then dropped her eyes again, passed me without another glance, and resumed her former place and attitude beside her father's grave.

I turned away. I would have given worlds to speak to her; but I had not dared, and the opportunity was gone. Yet I might have spoken. She looked at

me—looked at me with so strange and piteous an expression in her eyes—continued looking at me as long as one might have counted five.... I might have spoken. I surely might have spoken! And now—ah! now it was impossible. She had fallen into the old thoughtful attitude, with her cheek resting on her hand. Her thoughts were far away. She had forgotten my very presence.

I went back to the shore, more disturbed and uneasy than ever. I spent all the remaining daylight in rowing up and down the margin of the Lido, looking for her gondola—hoping, at all events, to see her put off—to follow her, perhaps, across the waste of waters. But the dusk came quickly on, and then darkness; and I left at last without having seen any farther sign or token of her presence.

Lying awake that night, tossing uneasily upon my bed, and thinking over the incidents of the last few days, I found

myself perpetually recurring to that long, steady, sorrowful gaze which she fixed upon me in the cemetery. The more I thought of it, the more I seemed to feel that there was in it some deeper meaning than I, in my confusion, had observed at the time. It was such a strange look—a look almost of entreaty, of asking for help or sympathy; like the dumb appeal in the eyes of a sick animal. Could this really be? What, after all, more possible than that, left alone in the world—with, perhaps, not a single male relation to advise her—she found herself in some position of present difficulty, and knew not where to turn for help? All this might well be. She had even, perhaps, some instinctive feeling that she might trust me. Ah! if she would indeed trust me. . . . .

I had hoped to receive my Paduan letter by the morning delivery; but morning and afternoon went by as before, and still no letter came. As the day began

to decline, I was again on my way to the Lido; this time for the purpose, and with the intention, of speaking to her. I landed, and went direct to the cemetery. It had been a dull day. Lagune and sky were both one uniform leaden grey, and a mist hung over Venice.

I saw her from the moment I reached the upper ridge. She was walking to and fro among the graves, like a stately shadow. I had felt confident, somehow, that she would be there; and now, for some reason that I could not have defined for my life, I felt equally confident that she expected me.

Trembling and eager, yet half dreading the moment when she should discover my presence, I hastened on, printing the loose sand at every noiseless step. A few moments more, and I should overtake her, speak to her, hear the music of her voice—that music which I remembered so well, though a year had gone by since I last heard it. But how

should I address her? What had I to say? I knew not. I had no time to think. I could only hurry on till within some ten feet of her trailing garments; stand still when she turned, and uncover before her as if she were a queen.

She paused and looked at me, just as she had paused and looked at me the evening before. With the same sorrowful meaning in her eyes; with even more than the same entreating expression. But she waited for me to speak.

I did speak. I cannot recall what I said; I only know that I faltered something of an apology—mentioned that I had had the honour of meeting her before, many months ago; and, trying to say more—trying to express how thankfully and proudly I would devote myself to any service however humble, however laborious, I failed both in voice and words, and broke down utterly.

Having come to a stop, I looked up and found her eyes still fixed upon me.

"You are a Christian?" she said.

A trembling came upon me at the first sound of her voice. It was the same voice; distinct, melodious, scarce louder than a whisper—and yet it was not quite the same. There was a melancholy in the music, and if I may use a word which, after all, fails to express my meaning, a *remoteness*, that fell upon my ear like the plaintive cadence in an autumnal wind.

I bent my head, and answered that I was.

She pointed to the headstone of which I had taken a rubbing a day or two before.

"A Christian soul lies there," she said, "laid in earth without one Christian prayer—with Hebrew rites—in a Hebrew sanctuary. Will you, stranger, perform an act of piety towards the dead?"

"The Signora has but to speak," I said. "All that she wishes shall be done."

"Read one prayer over this grave; and trace a cross upon this stone."

"I will."

She thanked me with a gesture, slightly bowed her head, drew her outer garment more closely round her, and moved away to a rising ground at some little distance. I was dismissed. I had no excuse for lingering—no right to prolong the interview—no business to remain there one moment longer. So I left her there, nor once looked back till I had reached the last point from which I knew I should be able to see her. But when I turned for that last look, she was no longer in sight.

I had resolved to speak to her, and this was the result. A stranger interview never, surely, fell to the lot of man! I had said nothing that I meant to say—had learnt nothing that I sought to know. With regard to her circumstances, her place of residence, her very name, I was no wiser than before.

And yet I had, perhaps, no reason to be dissatisfied. She had honoured me with her confidence, and entrusted to me a task of some difficulty and importance. It now only remained for me to execute that task as thoroughly and as quickly as possible. That done, I might fairly hope to win some place in her remembrance—by and by, perhaps, in her esteem.

Meanwhile, the old question rose again—whose grave could it be? I had settled this matter so conclusively in my own mind from the first, that I could scarcely believe even now that it was not her father's. Yet that he should have died a secret convert to Christianity was incredible. Whose grave could it be? A lover's? A Christian lover's? Alas! it might be. Or a sister's? In either of these cases, it was more than probable that Salome was herself a convert. But I had no

time to waste in conjecture. I must act, and act promptly.

I hastened back to Venice as fast as my gondolier could row me; and as we went along I promised myself that all her wishes should be carried out before she visited the spot again. To secure at once the services of a clergyman who would go with me to the Lido at early dawn and there read some portion, at least, of the burial service; and at the same time to engage a stonemason to cut the cross;—to have all done before she, or anyone, should have approached the place next day, was my especial object. And that object I was resolved to carry out, though I had to search Venice through before I laid my head upon my pillow.

I found a clergyman without difficulty. He was a young man occupying rooms in the same hotel, and on the same floor as myself. I had met him

each day at the *table d'hôte*, and conversed with him once or twice in the reading-room. He was a North-countryman, had not long since taken orders, and was both gentlemanly and obliging. He promised in the readiest manner to do all that I required, and to breakfast with me at six next morning, in order that we might reach the cemetery by eight.

To find my stonemason, however, was not so easy; and yet I went to work methodically enough. I began with the Venetian Directory; then copied a list of stonemasons' names and addresses; then took a gondola *a due remi* and started upon my voyage of discovery.

But a night's voyage of discovery among the intricate back *canaletti* of Venice is no very easy and no very safe enterprise. Narrow, tortuous, densely populated, often blocked by huge hay, wood, and provision barges, almost wholly unlighted, and so perplexingly

alike that no mere novice in Venetian topography need ever hope to distinguish one from another, they baffle the very gondoliers, and are a *terra incognita* to all but the dwellers therein.

I succeeded, however, in finding three of the places entered on my list. At the first I was told that the workman of whom I was in quest was working by the week somewhere over by Murano, and would not be back again till Saturday night. At the second and third, I found the men at home, supping with their wives and children at the end of the day's work; but neither would consent to undertake my commission. One, after a whispered consultation with his son, declined reluctantly. The other told me plainly that he dared not do it, and that he did not believe I should find a stone-mason in Venice who would be bolder than himself.

The Jews, he said, were rich and powerful; no longer an oppressed people;

no longer to be insulted even in Venice with impunity. To cut a Christian cross upon a Jewish headstone in the Jewish Cemetery, would be "a sort of sacrilege," and punishable, no doubt, by the law. This sounded like truth; so, finding that my rowers were by no means confident of their way, and that the *canaletti* were dark as the catacombs, I prevailed upon the stonemason to sell me a small mallet and a couple of chisels, and made up my mind to commit the sacrilege myself.

With this single exception, all was done next morning as I had planned to do it. My new acquaintance breakfasted with me, accompanied me to the Lido, read such portions of the burial service as seemed proper to him, and then, having business in Venice, left me to my task. It was by no means an easy one. To a skilled hand it would have been, perhaps, the work of half-an-hour; but it was my first effort, and

rude as the thing was—a mere grooved attempt at a Latin cross, about two inches and a half in length, cut close down at the bottom of the stone, where it could be easily concealed by a little piling of the sand—it took me nearly four hours to complete. While I was at work, the dull grey morning grew duller and greyer; a thick sea-fog drove up from the Adriatic; and a low moaning wind came and went like the echo of a distant requiem. More than once I started, believing that she had surprised me there—fancying I saw the passing of a shadow—heard the rustling of a garment—the breathing of a sigh. But no. The mists and the moaning wind deceived me. I was alone.

When at length I got back to my hotel, it was just two o'clock. The hall-porter put a letter into my hand as I passed through. One glance at that crabbed superscription was enough. It was from Padua. I hastened to my room, tore

open the envelope, and read these words:—

"CARO SIGNORE,—The rubbing you send is neither ancient nor curious, as I fear you suppose it to be. It is a thing of yesterday. It merely records that one Salome, the only and beloved child of a certain Isaac Da Costa, died last Autumn on the eighteenth of October, aged twenty-one years, and that by the said Isaac Da Costa this monument is erected to the memory of her virtues and his grief.

"I pray you, *caro signore*, to receive the assurance of my sincere esteem.

"NICOLO NICOLAI."

The letter dropped from my hand. I seemed to have read without understanding it. I picked it up; went through it again, word by word; sat down; rose up; took a turn across the room; felt confused, bewildered, incredulous.

Could there, then, be two Salomes? or was there some radical and extraordinary mistake?

I hesitated; I knew not what to do. Should I go down to the Merceria, and see whether the name of Da Costa was known in the *quartier?* Or find out the registrar of births and deaths for the Jewish district? Or call upon the principal rabbi, and learn from him who this second Salome had been, and in what degree of relationship she stood towards the Salome whom I knew? I decided upon the last course. The chief rabbi's address was easily obtained. He lived in an ancient house on the Giudecca, and there I found him—a grave, stately old man, with a grizzled beard reaching nearly to his waist.

I introduced myself and stated my business. I came to ask if he could give me any information respecting the late Salome da Costa who died on the 18th of October last, and was buried on the Lido.

The rabbi replied that he had no doubt he could give me any information I desired, for he had known the lady personally, and was the intimate friend of her father.

"Can you tell me," I asked, "whether she had any dear friend or female relative of the same name—Salome?"

The rabbi shook his head.

"I think not," he said. "I remember no other maiden of that name."

"Pardon me, but I know there was another," I replied. "There was a very beautiful Salome living in the Merceria when I was last in Venice, just this time last year."

"Salome da Costa was very fair," said the rabbi; "and she dwelt with her father in the Merceria. Since her death, he hath removed to the neighbourhood of the Rialto."

"This Salome's father was a dealer in Oriental goods," I said, hastily.

"Isaac da Costa is a dealer in Oriental

goods," replied the old man very gently. "We are speaking, my son, of the same persons."

"Impossible!"

He shook his head again.

"But she lives!" I exclaimed, becoming greatly agitated. "She lives. I have seen her. I have spoken to her. I saw her only last evening."

"Nay," he said, compassionately, "this is some dream. She of whom you speak is indeed no more."

"I saw her only last evening," I repeated.

"Where did you suppose you beheld her?"

"On the Lido."

"On the Lido?"

"And she spoke to me. I heard her voice—heard it as distinctly as I hear my own at this moment."

The rabbi stroked his beard thoughtfully, and looked at me. "You think you heard her voice!" he ejaculated. "That is strange. What said she?"

I was about to answer. I checked myself—a sudden thought flashed upon me—I trembled from head to foot.

"Have you—have you any reason for supposing that she died a Christian?" I faltered.

The old man started and changed colour.

"I—I—that is a strange question," he stammered. "Why do you ask it?"

"Yes or no?" I cried wildly. "Yes or no?"

He frowned, looked down, hesitated.

"I admit," he said, after a moment or two,—"I admit that I may have heard something tending that way. It may be that the maiden cherished some secret doubt. Yet she was no professed Christian."

"*Laid in earth without one Christian prayer; with Hebrew rites; in a Hebrew sanctuary!*" I repeated to myself.

"But I marvel how you come to have heard of this," continued the rabbi. "It

was known only to her father and myself."

"Sir," I said solemnly, "I know now that Salome da Costa is dead; I have seen her spirit thrice, haunting the spot where . . . ."

My voice broke. I could not utter the words.

"Last evening at sunset," I resumed, "was the third time. Never doubting that—that I indeed beheld her in the flesh, I spoke to her. She answered me. She —she told me this."

The rabbi covered his face with his hands, and so remained for some time, lost in meditation. "Young man," he said at length, "your story is strange, and you bring strange evidence to bear upon it. It may be as you say; it may be that you are the dupe of some waking dream—I know not."

He knew not; but I . . . Ah! I knew only too well. I knew now why she

had appeared to me clothed with such unearthly beauty. I understood now that look of dumb entreaty in her eyes —that tone of strange remoteness in her voice. The sweet soul could not rest amid the dust of its kinsfolk, "unhousel'd, unanointed, unanealed," lacking even "one Christian prayer" above its grave. And now—was it all over? Should I never see her more?

Never—ah! never. How I haunted the Lido at sunset for many a month, till Spring had blossomed into Autumn, and Autumn had ripened into Summer; how I wandered back to Venice year after year at the same season, while yet any vestige of that wild hope remained alive; how my heart has never throbbed, my pulse never leaped, for love of mortal woman since that time —are details into which I need not enter here. Enough that I watched and waited; but that her gracious spirit

appeared to me no more. I wait still, but I watch no longer. I know now that our place of meeting will not be here.

IN THE CONFESSIONAL.

IN THE CONFESSIONAL.

THE things of which I write befell—let me see, some fifteen or eighteen years ago. I was not young then; I am not old now. Perhaps I was about thirty-two; but I do not know my age very exactly, and I cannot be certain to a year or two one way or the other.

My manner of life at that time was desultory and unsettled. I had a sorrow—no matter of what kind—and I took to rambling about Europe; not certainly in the hope of forgetting it, for I had no wish to forget, but because of the restlessness that made one place

after another *triste* and intolerable to me.

It was change of place, however, and not excitement, that I sought. I kept almost entirely aloof from great cities, Spas, and beaten tracks, and preferred for the most part to explore districts where travellers and foreigners rarely penetrated.

Such a district at that time was the Upper Rhine. I was traversing it that particular Summer for the first time, and on foot; and I had set myself to trace the course of the river from its source in the great Rhine glacier to its fall at Schaffhausen. Having done this, however, I was unwilling to part company with the noble river; so I decided to follow it yet a few miles farther—perhaps as far as Mayence, but at all events as far as Basle.

And now began, if not the finest, certainly not the least charming part of my journey. Here, it is true, were neither

Alps, nor glaciers, nor ruined castles perched on inaccessible crags; but my way lay through a smiling country, studded with picturesque hamlets, and beside a bright river, hurrying along over swirling rapids, and under the dark arches of antique covered bridges, and between hill-sides garlanded with vines.

It was towards the middle of a long day's walk among such scenes as these that I came to Rheinfelden, a small place on the left bank of the river, about fourteen miles above Basle.

As I came down the white road in the blinding sunshine, with the vines on either hand, I saw the town lying low on the opposite bank of the Rhine. It was an old walled town, enclosed on the land side and open to the river, the houses going sheer down to the water's edge, with flights of slimy steps worn smooth by the wash of the current, and overhanging eaves, and little built-out rooms with pent-house roofs, supported

from below by jutting piles black with age and tapestried with water-weeds. The stunted towers of a couple of churches stood up from amid the brown and tawny roofs within the walls.

Beyond the town, height above height, stretched a distance of wooded hills. The old covered bridge, divided by a bit of rocky island in the middle of the stream, led from bank to bank—from Germany to Switzerland. The town was in Switzerland; I, looking towards it from the road, stood on Baden territory; the river ran sparkling and foaming between.

I crossed, and found the place all alive in anticipation of a Kermess, or fair, that was to be held there the next day but one. The townsfolk were all out in the streets or standing about their doors; and there were carpenters hard at work knocking up rows of wooden stands and stalls the whole length of the principal thoroughfare. Shop-signs in open-work

of wrought iron hung over the doors. A runlet of sparkling water babbled down a stone channel in the middle of the street. At almost every other house (to judge by the rows of tarnished watches hanging in the dingy parlour windows), there lived a watchmaker; and presently I came to a fountain—a regular Swiss fountain, spouting water from four ornamental pipes, and surmounted by the usual armed knight in old grey stone.

As I rambled on thus (looking for an inn, but seeing none), I suddenly found that I had reached the end of the street, and with it the limit of the town on this side. Before me rose a lofty, picturesque old gate-tower, with a tiled roof and a little window over the archway; and there was a peep of green grass and golden sunshine beyond. The town walls (sixty or seventy feet in height, and curiously roofed with a sort of projecting shed on the inner side) curved away to

right and left, unchanged since the Middle Ages. A rude wain, laden with clover and drawn by mild-eyed, cream-coloured oxen, stood close by in the shade.

I passed out through the gloom of the archway into the sunny space beyond. The moat outside the walls was bridged over and filled in — a green ravine of grasses and wild-flowers. A stork had built its nest on the roof of the gate-tower. The cicalas shrilled in the grass. The shadows lay sleeping under the trees, and a family of cocks and hens went plodding inquisitively to and fro among the cabbages in the adjacent field. Just beyond the moat, with only this field between, stood a little solitary church—a church with a wooden porch, and a quaint, bright-red steeple, and a churchyard like a rose-garden, full of colour and perfume, and scattered over with iron crosses wreathed with immortelles.

The churchyard gate and the church door stood open. I went in. All was clean, and simple, and very poor. The walls were whitewashed; the floor was laid with red bricks; the roof raftered. A tiny confessional like a sentry-box stood in one corner; the font was covered with a lid like a wooden steeple; and over the altar, upon which stood a pair of battered brass candlesticks and two vases of artificial flowers, hung a daub of the Holy Family, in oils.

All here was so cool, so quiet, that I sat down for a few moments and rested. Presently an old peasant woman trudged up the church-path with a basket of vegetables on her head. Having set this down in the porch, she came in, knelt before the altar, said her simple prayers, and went her way.

Was it not time for me also to go my way? I looked at my watch. It was past four o'clock, and I had not yet found a lodging for the night.

I got up, somewhat unwillingly; but, attracted by a tablet near the altar, crossed over to look at it before leaving the church. It was a very small slab, and bore a very brief German inscription to this effect:—

TO THE SACRED MEMORY

OF

THE REVEREND PÈRE CHESSEZ,

For twenty years the beloved Pastor of this Parish.

Died April 16th, 1825. Aged 44.

HE LIVED A SAINT; HE DIED A MARTYR.

I read it over twice, wondering idly what story was wrapped up in the concluding line. Then, prompted by a childish curiosity, I went up to examine the confessional.

It was, as I have said, about the size of a sentry-box, and was painted to imitate old dark oak. On the one side was a narrow door with a black handle, on the other a little opening like a ticket-

taker's window, closed on the inside by a faded green curtain.

I know not what foolish fancy possessed me, but, almost without considering what I was doing, I turned the handle and opened the door. Opened it—peeped in—found the priest sitting in his place—started back as if I had been shot—and stammered an unintelligible apology.

"I—I beg a thousand pardons," I exclaimed. "I had no idea—seeing the church empty——"

He was sitting with averted face, and clasped hands lying idly in his lap—a tall, gaunt man, dressed in a black soutane. When I paused, and not till then, he slowly, very slowly, turned his head, and looked me in the face.

The light inside the confessional was so dim that I could not see his features very plainly. I only observed that his eyes were large, and bright, and wild-

looking, like the eyes of some fierce animal, and that his face, with the reflection of the green curtain upon it, looked lividly pale.

For a moment we remained thus, gazing at each other, as if fascinated. Then, finding that he made no reply, but only stared at me with those strange eyes, I stepped hastily back, shut the door without another word, and hurried out of the church.

I was very much disturbed by this little incident; more disturbed, in truth, than seemed reasonable, for my nerves for the moment were shaken. Never, I told myself, never while I lived could I forget that fixed attitude and stony face, or the glare of those terrible eyes. What was the man's history? Of what secret despair, of what life-long remorse, of what wild unsatisfied longings was he the victim? I felt I could not rest till I had learned something of his past life.

Full of these thoughts, I went on quickly into the town, half running across the field, and never looking back. Once past the gateway and inside the walls, I breathed more freely. The wain was still standing in the shade, but the oxen were gone now, and two men were busy forking out the clover into a little yard close by. Having inquired of one of these regarding an inn, and being directed to the Krone, "over against the Frauenkirche," I made my way to the upper part of the town, and there, at one corner of a forlorn, weed-grown market-place, I found my hostelry.

The landlord, a sedate, bald man in spectacles, who, as I presently discovered, was not only an inn-keeper but a clock-maker, came out from an inner room to receive me. His wife, a plump, pleasant body, took my orders for dinner. His pretty daughter showed me to my room. It was a large, low, whitewashed room, with two lattice win-

dows overlooking the market-place, two little beds, covered with puffy red eider-downs at the farther end, and an army of clocks and ornamental timepieces arranged along every shelf, table, and chest of drawers in the room. Being left here to my meditations, I sat down and counted these companions of my solitude.

Taking little and big together, Dutch clocks, cuckoo clocks, *châlet* clocks, skeleton clocks, and *pendules* in ormolu, bronze, marble, ebony, and alabaster cases, there were exactly thirty-two. Twenty-eight were going merrily. As no two among them were of the same opinion as regarded the time, and as several struck the quarters as well as the hours, the consequence was that one or other gave tongue about every five minutes. Now, for a light and nervous sleeper such as I was at that time, here was a lively prospect for the night!

Going down-stairs presently with the hope of getting my landlady to assign me

a quieter room, I passed two eight-day clocks on the landing, and a third at the foot of the stairs. The public room was equally well-stocked. It literally bristled with clocks, one of which played a spasmodic version of Gentle Zitella with variations every quarter of an hour. Here I found a little table prepared by the open window, and a dish of trout and a flask of country wine awaiting me. The pretty daughter waited upon me; her mother bustled to and fro with the dishes; the landlord stood by, and beamed upon me through his spectacles.

"The trout were caught this morning, about two miles from here," he said, complacently.

"They are excellent," I replied, filling him out a glass of wine, and helping myself to another. "Your health, Herr Wirth."

"Thanks, mein Herr—yours."

Just at this moment two clocks struck at opposite ends of the room—one twelve,

and the other seven. I ventured to suggest that mine host was tolerably well reminded of the flight of time; whereupon he explained that his work lay chiefly in the repairing and regulating line, and that at that present moment he had no less than one hundred and eighteen clocks of various sorts and sizes on the premises.

"Perhaps the Herr Engländer is a light sleeper," said his quick-witted wife, detecting my dismay. "If so, we can get him a bed-room elsewhere. Not, perhaps, in the town, for I know no place where he would be as comfortable as with ourselves; but just outside the Friedrich's Thor, not five minutes' walk from our door."

I accepted the offer gratefully.

"So long," I said, "as I ensure cleanliness and quiet, I do not care how homely my lodgings may be."

"Ah, you'll have both, mein Herr, if you go where my wife is thinking of,"

said the landlord. "It is at the house of our pastor—the Père Chessez."

"The Père Chessez!" I exclaimed. "What, the pastor of the little church out yonder?"

"The same, mein Herr."

"But—but surely the Père Chessez is dead! I saw a tablet to his memory in the chancel."

"Nay, that was our pastor's elder brother," replied the landlord, looking grave. "He has been gone these thirty years and more. His was a tragical ending."

But I was thinking too much of the younger brother just then to feel any curiosity about the elder; and I told myself that I would put up with the companionship of any number of clocks, rather than sleep under the same roof with that terrible face and those unearthly eyes.

"I saw your pastor just now in the church," I said, with apparent indif-

ference. "He is a singular-looking man."

"He is too good for this world," said the landlady.

"He is a saint upon earth!" added the pretty Fräulein.

"He is one of the best of men," said, more soberly, the husband and father. "I only wish he was less of a saint. He fasts, and prays, and works beyond his strength. A little more beef and a little less devotion would be all the better for him."

"I should like to hear something more about the life of so good a man," said I, having by this time come to the end of my simple dinner. "Come, Herr Wirth, let us have a bottle of your best, and then sit down and tell me your pastor's history!"

The landlord sent his daughter for a bottle of the "green seal," and, taking a chair, said:—

"Ach Himmel! mein Herr, there is no

history to tell. The good father has lived here all his life. He is one of us. His father, Johann Chessez, was a native of Rheinfelden and kept this very inn. He was a wealthy farmer and vine-grower. He had only those two sons—Nicholas, who took to the church and became pastor of Feldkirche; and this one, Matthias, who was intended to inherit the business; but who also entered religion after the death of his elder brother, and is now pastor of the same parish."

"But why did he 'enter religion?'" I asked. "Was he in any way to blame for the accident (if it was an accident) that caused the death of his elder brother?"

"Ah Heavens! no!" exclaimed the landlady, leaning on the back of her husband's chair. "It was the shock—the shock that told so terribly upon his poor nerves! He was but a lad at that time, and as sensitive as a girl—but the Herr

Engländer does not know the story. Go on, my husband."

So the landlord, after a sip of the "green seal," continued :—

"At the time my wife alludes to, mein Herr, Johann Chessez was still living. Nicholas, the elder son, was in holy orders and established in the parish of Feldkirche, outside the walls; and Matthias, the younger, was a lad of about fourteen years old, and lived with his father. He was an amiable good boy—pious and thoughtful—fonder of his books than of the business. The neighbour-folk used to say even then that Matthias was cut out for a priest, like his elder brother. As for Nicholas, he was neither more nor less than a saint. Well, mein Herr, at this time there lived on the other side of Rheinfelden, about a mile beyond the Basel Thor, a farmer named Caspar Rufenacht and his wife Margaret. Now Caspar Rufenacht was a jealous, quarrelsome fellow; and the Frau Margaret was

pretty; and he led her a devil of a life. It was said that he used to beat her when he had been drinking, and that sometimes, when he went to fair or market, he would lock her up for the whole day in a room at the top of the house. Well, this poor, ill-used Frau Margaret—"

"Tut, tut, my man," interrupted the landlady. "The Frau Margaret was a light one!"

"Peace, wife! Shall we speak hard words of the dead? The Frau Margaret was young and pretty, and a flirt; and she had a bad husband, who left her too much alone."

The landlady pursed up her lips and shook her head, as the best of women will do when the character of another woman is under discussion. The innkeeper went on.

"Well, mein Herr, to cut a long story short, after having been jealous first of one and then of another, Caspar Rufen-

acht became furious about a certain German, a Badener named Schmidt, living on the opposite bank of the Rhine. I remember the man quite well—a handsome, merry fellow, and no saint; just the sort to make mischief between man and wife. Well, Caspar Rufenacht swore a great oath that, cost what it might, he would come at the truth about his wife and Schmidt; so he laid all manner of plots to surprise them —waylaid the Frau Margaret in her walks; followed her at a distance when she went to church; came home at unexpected hours; and played the spy as if he had been brought up to the trade. But his spying was all in vain. Either the Frau Margaret was too clever for him, or there was really nothing to discover; but still he was not satisfied. So he cast about for some way to attain his end, and, by the help of the Evil One, he found it."

Here the innkeeper's wife and daughter, who had doubtless heard the story a

hundred times over, drew near and listened breathlessly.

"What, think you," continued the landlord, "does this black-souled Caspar do? Does he punish the poor woman within an inch of her life, till she confesses? No. Does he charge Schmidt with having tempted her from her duty, and fight it out with him like a man? No. What else then? I will tell you. He waits till the vigil of St. Margaret—her saint's day—when he knows the poor sinful soul is going to confession; and he marches straight to the house of the Père Chessez—the very house where our own Père Chessez is now living—and he finds the good priest at his devotions in his little study, and he says to him:

"'Father Chessez, my wife is coming to the church this afternoon to make her confession to you.'

"'She is,' replies the priest.

"'I want you to tell me all she tells you,' says Caspar; and I will wait here

till you come back from the church, that I may hear it. Will you do so?'

"'Certainly not,' replies the Père Chessez. 'You must surely know, Caspar, that we priests are forbidden to reveal the secrets of the confessional.'

"'That is nothing to me,' says Caspar, with an oath. 'I am resolved to know whether my wife is guilty or innocent; and know it I will, by fair means or foul.'

"'You shall never know it from me, Caspar,' says the Père Chessez, very quietly.

"'Then, by Heavens!' says Caspar, 'I'll learn it for myself.' And with that he pulls out a heavy horse-pistol from his pocket, and with the butt-end of it deals the Père Chessez a tremendous blow upon the head, and then another, and another, till the poor young man lay senseless at his feet. Then Caspar, thinking he had quite killed him, dressed himself in the priest's own soutane

and hat; locked the door; put the key in his pocket; and stealing round the back way into the church, shut himself up in the confessional."

"Then the priest died!" I exclaimed, remembering the epitaph upon the tablet.

"Ay, mein Herr—the Père Chessez died; but not before he had told the story of his assassination, and identified his murderer."

"And Caspar Rufenacht, I hope, was hanged?"

"Wait a bit, mein Herr, we have not come to that yet. We left Caspar in the confessional, waiting for his wife."

"And she came?"

"Yes, poor soul! she came."

"And made her confession?"

"And made her confession, mein Herr."

"What did she confess?"

The innkeeper shook his head.

"That no one ever knew, save the good God and her murderer."

"Her murderer!" I exclaimed.

"Ay, just that. Whatever it was that she confessed, she paid for it with her life. He heard her out, at all events, without discovering himself, and let her go home believing that she had received absolution for her sins. Those who met her that afternoon said she seemed unusually bright and happy. As she passed through the town, she went into the shop in the Mongarten Strasse, and bought some ribbons. About half an hour later, my own father met her outside the Basel Thor, walking briskly homewards. He was the last who saw her alive.

"That evening (it was in October, and the days were short), some travellers coming that way into the town heard shrill cries, as of a woman screaming, in the direction of Caspar's farm. But the night was very dark, and the house lay back a little way from the road; so they told themselves it was only some drunken peasant quarrelling with his wife, and

passed on. Next morning Caspar Rufenacht came to Rheinfelden, walked very quietly into the Polizei, and gave himself up to justice.

"'I have killed my wife,' said he. I, have killed the Père Chessez. And I have committed sacrilege.'

"And so, indeed, it was. As for the Frau Margaret, they found her body in an upper chamber, well-nigh hacked to pieces, and the hatchet with which the murder was committed lying beside her on the floor. He had pursued her, apparently, from room to room; for there were pools of blood and handfuls of long light hair, and marks of bloody hands along the walls, all the way from the kitchen to the spot where she lay dead."

"And so he was hanged?" said I, coming back to my original question.

"Yes, yes," replied the innkeeper and his womankind in chorus. "He was hanged—of course he was hanged."

"And it was the shock of this double

tragedy that drove the younger Chessez into the church ?"

" Just so, mein Herr."

" Well, he carries it in his face. He looks like a most unhappy man."

" Nay, he is not that, mein Herr !" exclaimed the landlady. " He is melancholy, but not unhappy."

" Well, then, austere."

" Nor is he austere, except towards himself."

" True, wife," said the innkeeper; " but, as I said, he carries that sort of thing too far. You understand, mein Herr," he added, touching his forehead with his forefinger, " the good pastor has let his mind dwell too much upon the past. He is nervous—too nervous, and too low."

I saw it all now. That terrible light in his eyes was the light of insanity. That stony look in his face was the fixed, hopeless melancholy of a mind diseased.

"Does he know that he is mad?" I asked, as the landlord rose to go.

He shrugged his shoulders and looked doubtful.

"I have not said that the Père Chessez is *mad*, mein Herr," he replied. "He has strange fancies sometimes, and takes his fancies for facts—that is all. But I am quite sure that he does not believe himself to be less sane than his neighbours."

So the innkeeper left me, and I (my head full of the story I had just heard) put on my hat, went out into the market-place, asked my way to the Basel Thor, and set off to explore the scene of the Frau Margaret's murder.

I found it without difficulty—a long, low-fronted, beetle-browed farm-house, lying back a meadow's length from the road. There were children playing upon the threshold, a flock of turkeys gobbling about the barn-door, and a big dog sleeping outside his kennel close by.

The chimneys, too, were smoking merrily. Seeing these signs of life and cheerfulness, I abandoned all idea of asking to go over the house. I felt that I had no right to carry my morbid curiosity into this peaceful home; so I turned away, and retraced my steps towards Rheinfelden.

It was not yet seven, and the sun had still an hour's course to run. I re-entered the town, strolled back through the street, and presently came again to the Friedrich's Thor and the path leading to the church. An irresistible impulse seemed to drag me back to the place.

Shudderingly, and with a sort of dread that was half longing, I pushed open the churchyard gate and went in. The doors were closed; a goat was browsing among the graves; and the rushing of the Rhine, some three hundred yards away, was distinctly audible in the silence. I looked round for the priest's house—the scene of the first murder; but from this side,

at all events, no house was visible. Going round, however, to the back of the church, I saw a gate, a box-bordered path, and, peeping through some trees, a chimney and the roof of a little brown-tiled house.

This, then, was the path along which Caspar Rufenacht, with the priest's blood upon his hands and the priest's gown upon his shoulders, had taken his guilty way to the confessional! How quiet it all looked in the golden evening light! How like the church-path of an English parsonage!

I wished I could have seen something more of the house than that bit of roof and that one chimney. There must, I told myself, be some other entrance—some way round by the road! Musing and lingering thus, I was startled by a quiet voice close against my shoulder, saying:—

"A pleasant evening, mein Herr!"

I turned, and found the priest at my

elbow. He had come noiselessly across the grass, and was standing between me and the sunset, like a shadow.

"I—I beg your pardon," I stammered, moving away from the gate. "I was looking—"

I stopped in some surprise, and indeed with some sense of relief, for it was not the same priest that I had seen in the morning. No two, indeed, could well be more unlike, for this man was small, white-haired, gentle-looking, with a soft, sad smile inexpressibly sweet and winning.

"You were looking at my arbutus?" he said.

I had scarcely observed the arbutus till now, but I bowed and said something to the effect that it was an unusually fine tree.

"Yes," he replied; "but I have a rhododendron round at the front that is still finer. Will you come in and see it?"

I said I should be pleased to do so. He led the way, and I followed.

"I hope you like this part of our Rhine-country?" he said, as we took the path through the shrubbery

"I like it so well," I replied, "that if I were to live anywhere on the banks of the Rhine, I should certainly choose some spot on the Upper Rhine between Schaffhausen and Basle."

"And you would be right," he said. "Nowhere is the river so beautiful. Nearer the glaciers it is milky and turbid —beyond Basle it soon becomes muddy. Here we have it blue as the sky—sparkling as champagne. Here is my rhododendron. It stands twelve feet high, and measures as many in diameter. I had more than two hundred blooms upon it last Spring."

When I had duly admired this giant shrub, he took me to a little arbour on a bit of steep green bank overlooking the river, where he invited me to sit down

and rest. From hence I could see the porch and part of the front of his little house; but it was all so closely planted round with trees and shrubs that no clear view of it seemed obtainable in any direction. Here we sat for some time chatting about the weather, the approaching vintage, and so forth, and watching the sunset. Then I rose to take my leave.

"I heard of you this evening at the Krone, mein Herr," he said. "You were out, or I should have called upon you. I am glad that chance has made us acquainted. Do you remain over to-morrow?"

"No; I must go on to-morrow to Basle," I answered. And then, hesitating a little, I added:—"you heard of me, also, I fear, in the church."

"In the church?" he repeated.

"Seeing the door open, I went in—from curiosity—as a traveller; just to look round for a moment and rest."

"Naturally."

"I—I had no idea, however, that I was not alone there. I would not for the world have intruded—"

"I do not understand," he said, seeing me hesitate. "The church stands open all day long. It is free to every one."

"Ah! I see he has not told you!"

The priest smiled but looked puzzled.

"He? Whom do you mean?"

"The other priest, mon père—your colleague. I regret to have broken in upon his meditations; but I had been so long in the church, and it was all so still and quiet, that it never occurred to me that there might be some one in the confessional."

The priest looked at me in a strange, startled way.

"In the confessional!" he repeated, with a catching of his breath. "You saw some one—in the confessional?"

"I am ashamed to say that, having thoughtlessly opened the door—"

"You saw—what did you see?"

"A priest, mon père."

"A priest! Can you describe him? Should you know him again? Was he pale, and tall, and gaunt, with long black hair?"

"The same, undoubtedly."

"And his eyes—did you observe anything particular about his eyes?"

"Yes; they were large, wild-looking, dark eyes, with a look in them—a look I cannot describe."

"A look of terror!" cried the pastor, now greatly agitated. "A look of terror—of remorse—of despair!"

"Yes, it was a look that might mean all that," I replied, my astonishment increasing at every word. "You seem troubled. Who is he?"

"But instead of answering my question, the pastor took off his hat, looked up with a radiant, awe-struck face, and said:—

"All-merciful God, I thank Thee! I

thank Thee that I am not mad, and that Thou hast sent this stranger to be my assurance and my comfort!"

Having said these words, he bowed his head, and his lips moved in silent prayer. When he looked up again, his eyes were full of tears.

"My son," he said, laying his trembling hand upon my arm, "I owe you an explanation; but I cannot give it to you now. It must wait till I can speak more calmly—till to-morrow, when I must see you again. It involves a terrible story—a story peculiarly painful to myself—enough now if I tell you that I have seen the Thing you describe—seen It many times; and yet, because It has been visible to my eyes alone, I have doubted the evidence of my senses. The good people here believe that much sorrow and meditation have touched my brain. I have half believed it myself till now. But you—you have proved to me that I am the victim of no illusion."

"But in Heaven's name," I exclaimed, "what do you suppose I saw in the confessional?"

"You saw the likeness of one who, guilty also of a double murder, committed the deadly sin of sacrilege in that very spot, more than thirty years ago," replied the Père Chessez, solemnly.

"Caspar Rufenacht!"

"Ah! you have heard the story? Then I am spared the pain of telling it to you. That is well."

I bent my head in silence. We walked together without another word to the wicket, and thence round to the church-yard gate. It was now twilight, and the first stars were out.

"Good-night, my son," said the pastor, giving me his hand. "Peace be with you."

As he spoke the words, his grasp tightened—his eyes dilated—his whole countenance became rigid.

"Look!" he whispered. "Look where it goes!"

I followed the direction of his eyes, and there, with a freezing horror which I have no words to describe, I saw—distinctly saw through the deepening gloom—a tall, dark figure in a priest's soutane and broad-brimmed hat, moving slowly across the path leading from the parsonage to the church. For a moment it seemed to pause—then passed on to the deeper shade, and disappeared.

"You saw it?" said the pastor.

"Yes—plainly."

He drew a deep breath; crossed himself devoutly; and leaned upon the gate, as if exhausted.

"This is the third time I have seen it this year," he said. "Again I thank God for the certainty that I see a visible thing, and that His great gift of reason is mine unimpaired. But I would that He were graciously pleased to release me from the sight—the horror of it is sometimes more

than I know how to bear. Good night."

With this he again touched my hand; and so, seeing that he wished to be alone, I silently left him. At the Friedrich's Thor I turned and looked back. He was still standing by the churchyard gate, just visible through the gloom of the fast deepening twilight.

* * * *

I never saw the Père Chessez again. Save his own old servant, I was the last who spoke with him in this world. He died that night—died in his bed, where he was found next morning with his hands crossed upon his breast, and with a placid smile upon his lips, as if he had fallen asleep in the act of prayer.

As the news spread from house to house, the whole town rang with lamentations. The church-bells tolled; the carpenters left their work in the streets; the children, dismissed from school, went home weeping.

"'Twill be the saddest Kermess in

Rheinfelden to-morrow, mien Herr!" said my good host of the Krone, as I shook hands with him at parting. "We have lost the best of pastors and of friends. He was a saint. If you had come but one day later, you would not have seen him!"

And with this he brushed his sleeve across his eyes, and turned away.

Every shutter was up, every blind down, every door closed, as I passed along the Friedrich's Strasse about midday on my way to Basle; and the few townsfolk I met looked grave and downcast. Then I crossed the bridge and, having shown my passport to the German sentry on the Baden side, I took one long, last farewell look at the little walled town as it lay sleeping in the sunshine by the river—knowing that I should see it no more.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

London: Printed by A. Schulze, 13, Poland Street.